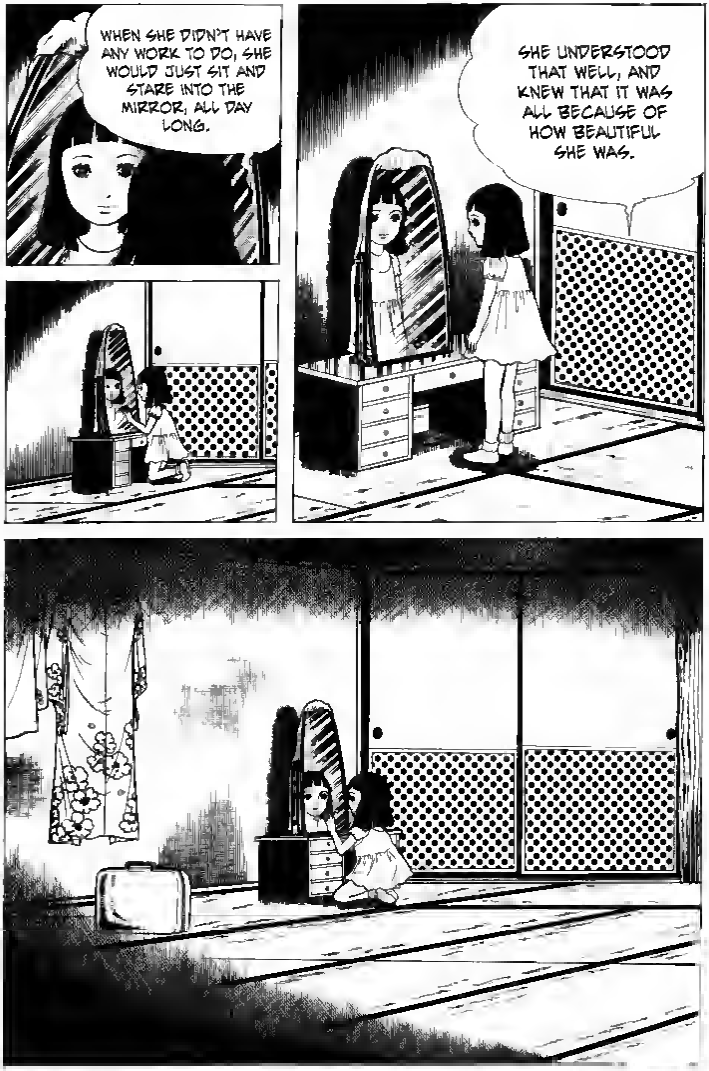
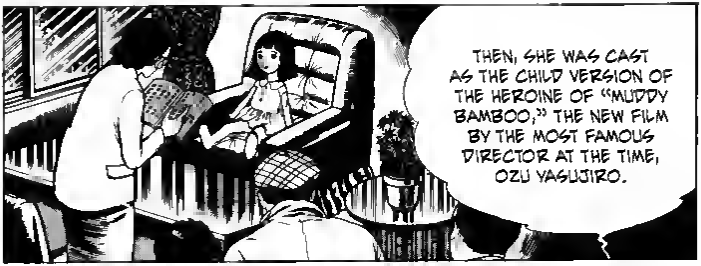
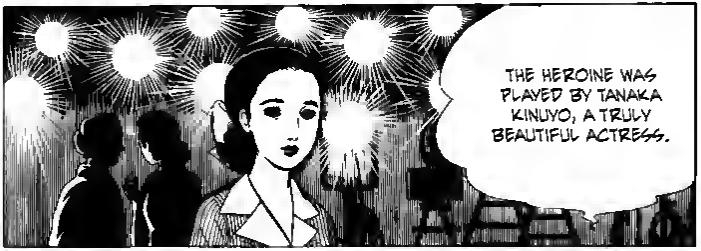

WHEN SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANY WORK TO DO, SHE WOULD JUST SIT AND STARE INTO THE MIRROR, ALL DAY LONG.
SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT WELL, AND KNEW THAT IT WAS ALL BECAUSE OF HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE WAS.


THEN, SHE WAS CAST AS THE CHILD VERSION OF THE HEROINE OF "MUDDY BAMBOO," THE NEW FILM BY THE MOST FAMOUS DIRECTOR AT THE TIME, OZU YASUJIRO.


THE HEROINE WAS PLAYED BY TANAKA KINUYO, A TRULY BEAUTIFUL ACTRESS.

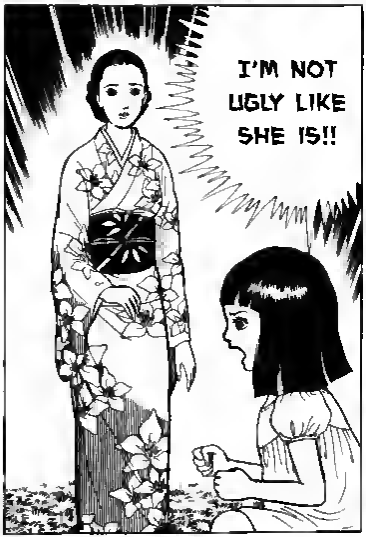
THE MALE STARS INCLUDED SANO SHUUJI, SABURI RISHIN, AND THE LATE OKADA TOKIHIKO.

AND SO, THE PRODUCTION WENT ALONG WELL...

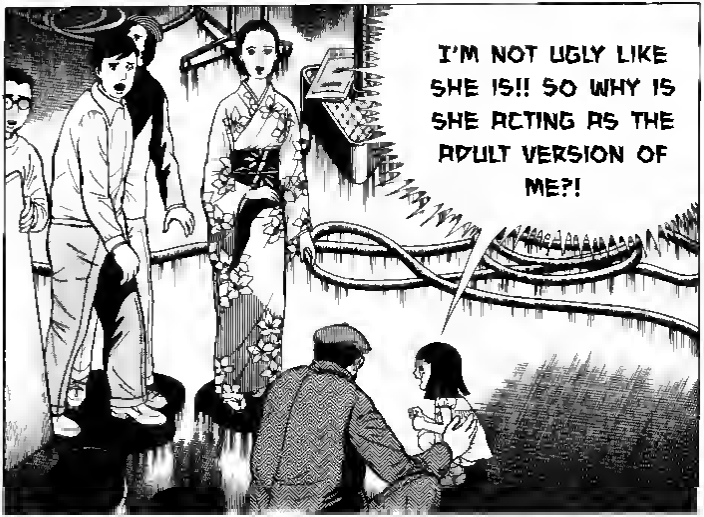
TANAKA KINUYO HAD ALREADY FINISHED DOING HER MAKEUP, AND WAS WAITING ON STANDBY.
UNTIL THEY GOT TO THE VERY LAST CHILD SCENE...
WAA AHH!
THE SCENE WAS REACHING ITS DRAMATIC CLIMAX, AND EVERYONE WAS WATCHING IT WITH BATED BREATH.
WAARU UUGGH!!

SFX: WAAUUUUGGGH
DUUGGG!
CUT, CUT!!
WH-WHAT'S WRONG?

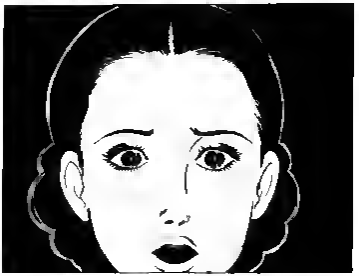
WAA AUUG GH!!
WH-WHAT HAPPENED ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WAA HH!
WH-WHAT'S WRONG?
NO!!
IF YOU DON'T STOP CRYING, WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S WRONG. COME NOW, IZUMI, TELL US WHAT'S WRONG. DO YOU HAVE A STOMACH ACHE?


I'M NOT UGLY LIKE SHE IS!!

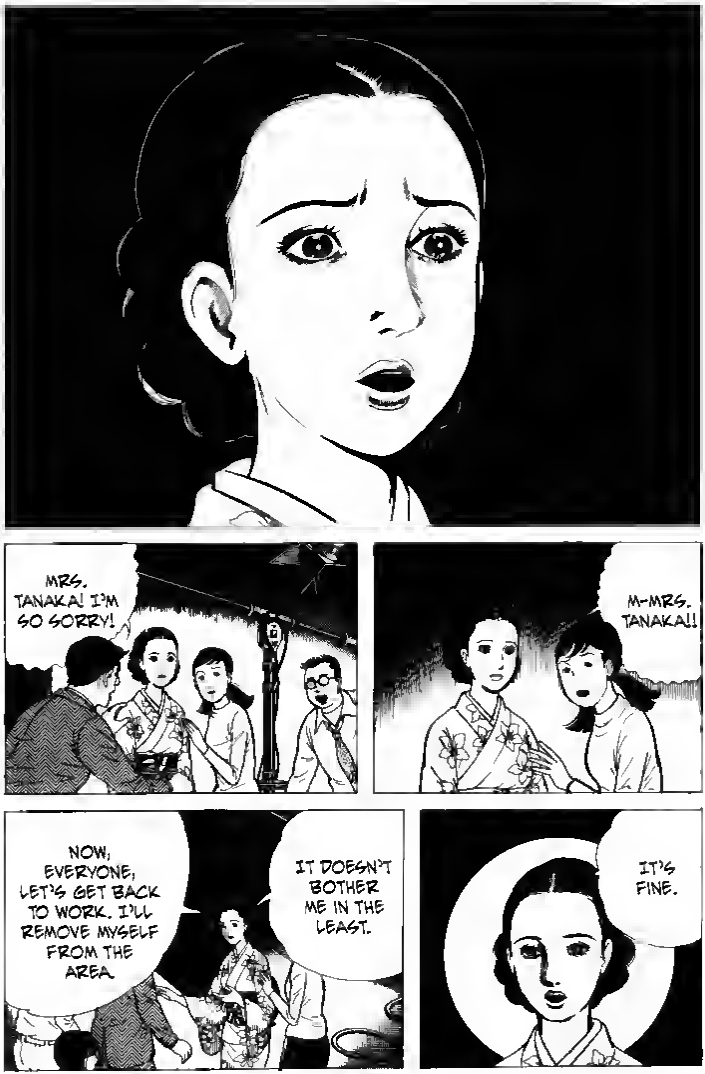
WHAT?!


I'M NOT UGLY LIKE SHE IS!! SO WHY IS SHE ACTING AS THE ADULT VERSION OF ME?!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
IZUMI!!

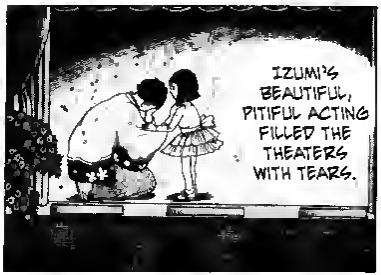


I'M NOT EXHAUSTED. I HATE HER!! SHE ISN'T BEAUTIFUL OR ANYTHING! WHY DOES SHE GET TO BE THE ADULT ME?!
Y-YOU JUST MUST BE EXHAUSTED.
IZUMI!! YOU NEED TO APOLOGIZE RIGHT NOW!!
WAAAHH!!
NO!! I'M NOT GOING TO APOLOGIZE!! WHY DO I HAVE TO APOLOGIZE FOR TELLING THE TRUTH?! I DON'T WANT TO!!

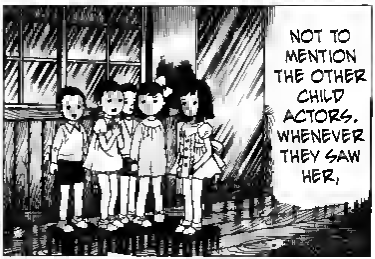

MRS. TANAKA! I'M SO SORRY!
M-MRS. TANAKA!!
NOW, EVERYONE, LET'S GET BACK TO WORK. I'LL REMOVE MYSELF FROM THE AREA.
IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME IN THE LEAST.
IT'S FINE.

OF COURSE, IT WAS A BIG HIT.

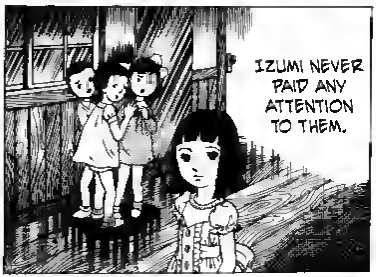
AND SO, "MUDDY BAMBOO" WAS COMPLETED.
松竹映画封切場


IZUMI'S BEAUTIFUL, PITIFUL ACTING FILLED THE THEATERS WITH TEARS.

AND SO, DAY BY DAY, SHE BECAME MORE AND MORE BEAUTIFUL.


NOT TO MENTION THE OTHER CHILD ACTORS. WHENEVER THEY SAW HER,

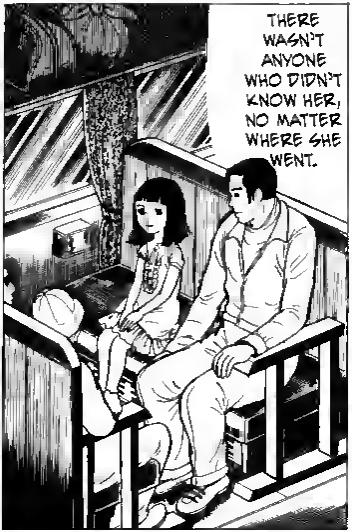
EVEN ADULTS WERE SPEECHLESS WHEN THEY MET HER.


IZUMI NEVER PAID ANY ATTENTION TO THEM.

SHE WAS ALWAYS AT THE TOP!!

HER FANS WERE PASSIONATE, AND EVERYONE ALWAYS EXPECTED GREAT THINGS FROM HER.
SOON, THROUGH HER WORK, HER MIND GREW OLDER THAN HER PHYSICAL AGE.
AND SHE WAS ALWAYS WAITING FOR MORE WORK.

KYAA AAH HH!!
SQUEAL, SQUEAL


THERE WASN'T ANYONE WHO DIDN'T KNOW HER, NO MATTER WHERE SHE WENT.

BUT TO OTHER PEOPLE, IT NEVER SEEMED LIKE THEY WERE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER...

HER MOTHER TOOK CARE OF ALL HER NEEDS.

IT LOOKED LIKE A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRL IN BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES... STANDING NEXT TO A MEAGER WOMAN...

IT WAS A STAR AND HER SERVANT.

AND THE SAME WAS TRUE FOR HER SICKLY FATHER.
THE FACT THAT HER DAUGHTER SUPPORTED HER FILLED HER MOTHER WITH GUILT,
WHENEVER IZUMI GOT EVEN THE LITTLEST BIT SICK, HER MOTHER WENT CRAZY TENDING TO HER HEALTH.
WHILE HER MOTHER NEVER STOPPED WORKING FOR HER.
HER FATHER LIVED QUIETLY IN THE CORNER OF TOWN...
ONE DAY, SHE NEEDED A SPECIFIC ACCESSORY TO SHOOT A SCENE.
SO SHE WORKED ALL NIGHT WHILE IZUMI WAS ASLEEP AND MADE ONE OUT OF PAPER.
HER MOTHER WANTED TO MAKE A SPECIAL ACCESSORY FOR HER DAUGHTER TO WEAR,

TIME TO GET STARTED!
THE NEXT DAY...
6
7
8
UMMM...
I MADE THIS FOR YOU LAST NIGHT...
HERE...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH. WOULD YOU MIND IF WE USED IT?
HEY, THAT LOOKS PRETTY.

STOP IT!!
RIP
AAAHH!!
STOP
!!!!!T!!

NOTE IMAGES GET REALLY DARK HERE AGAIN

I SAID NO!!
B-BUT...

SFX: SLAP

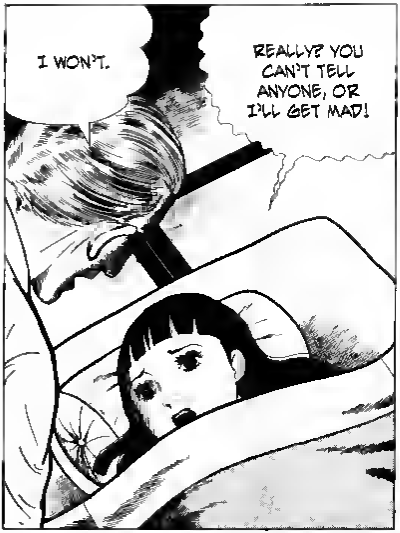
IZUMI!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO YOUR MOTHER?!
GIVE ME ANOTHER ONE!
I DON'T WANT IT!!

THAT NIGHT, IZUMI GOT A FEVER.
WH-WHAT SHOULD I DO?
YOUR FEVER ISN'T GOING DOWN.
UUUUU! UUUU!!
I WISH WE STILL HAD THAT DOCTOR ON CALL LIKE WE USED TO...
H-HOLD ON. I'LL GO CALL HIM AT ONCE!

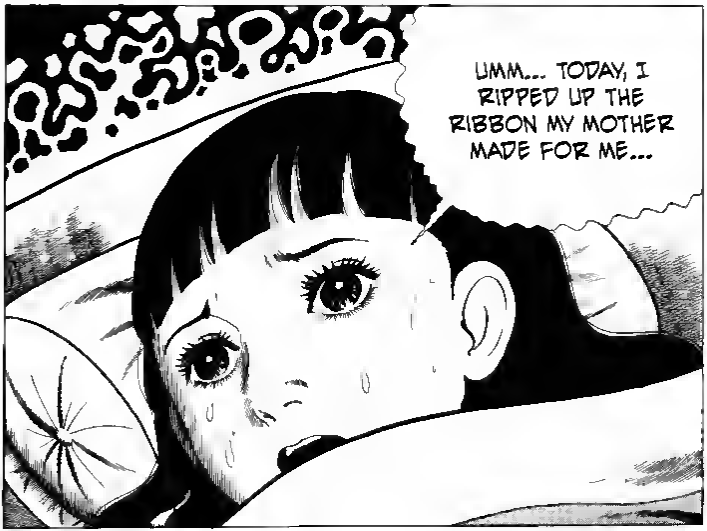
IT... IT HURTS!!
UUUUU!! UUUU!!
SFX: CRRRAK
ギギ…

WHAT'S WRONG?
OOH, THIS FEELS LIKE QUITE THE NASTY FEVER.
BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY, NOW THAT I'M HERE. I'LL FIX YOU UP IN A JIFFY.
YOUR MOTHER WILL COME SOON AS WELL.
JUST RELAX. YOUR DOCTOR'S HERE.

NO.
DID YOU EAT ANYTHING UNUSUAL?
I DIDN'T.
UMM...
THEN WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU CAN'T TELL ANYONE.


I WON'T.
REALLY? YOU CAN'T TELL ANYONE, OR I'LL GET MAD!

OF COURSE. I WON'T TELL ANYONE. I'M A DOCTOR, AFTER ALL... IT'S MY DUTY TO KEEP THINGS SECRET.

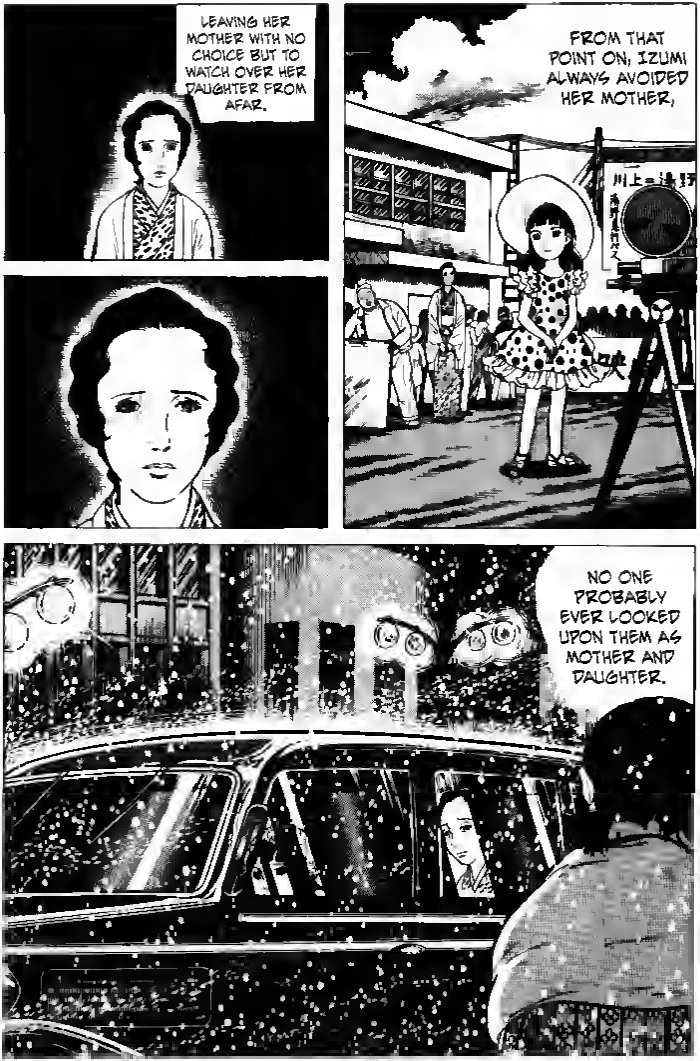

UMM... TODAY, I RIPPED UP THE RIBBON MY MOTHER MADE FOR ME...

OH? THAT WASN'T A VERY NICE THING TO DO. DIDN'T YOU LIKE IT?
NO! I RIPPED IT UP BECAUSE MY MOTHER GOT CLOSE AND TRIED TO PUT IT ON ME!!
I KNOW THE TRUTH! EVERYONE GETS OLD EVENTUALLY!!
SHE HAS WHITE HAIR! I KNOW IT! AND I SAW THE WRINKLES ON HER HANDS!!

I DON'T WANT TO END UP LIKE MY MOTHER!!
I SEE, I SEE. YOU POOR THING...
THAT'S WHY I HIT HER!!

YES...
NOW THAT YOU'VE TOLD ME EVERYTHING, YOU MUST FEEL A LOT BETTER.
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ANYMORE. I PROMISE TO GIVE YOU MY HELP WHEN THAT HAPPENS.
OK.
NOW, NO MORE WORRYING. OFF TO SLEEP YOU GO...
SFX: CREAK
HAA, HAA!!

A-ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MATSUKO?!
HER FEVER'S GONE DOWN!!
OH MY!! B-BUT WHY...


LEAVING HER MOTHER WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO WATCH OVER HER DAUGHTER FROM AFAR.
FROM THAT POINT ON, IZUMI ALWAYS AVOIDED HER MOTHER.
NO ONE PROBABLY EVER LOOKED UPON THEM AS MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

AND SO, IZUMI GREW UP AND BECAME EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL.

I DON'T WANT TO LOSE MY BEAUTY..
BUT EVERYONE GETS OLD...
NO!! I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO LOSE MINE!!

FROM THAT POINT ON, SHE WAS ASSAULTED BY HORRIBLE SUFFERING... DESPITE THE FACT THAT SHE WAS STILL JUST A YOUNG GIRL...
病気中
AND NO ONE WOULD EVER UNDER-STAND WHY.

YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY... I'LL COME TO HELP YOU WHEN THE TIME COMES.
WHENEVER SHE BECAME SICK, HER DOCTOR CAME TO TAKE CARE OF HER.
IT'S SO STRANGE, DOCTOR. WHENEVER I SEE YOU, I'M ABLE TO CALM DOWN.
REALLY?!
I'LL ALWAYS BE AT YOUR SIDE... BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.
THAT'S BECAUSE I'VE BEEN TAKING CARE OF YOU EVER SINCE YOU WERE A LITTLE BABY...

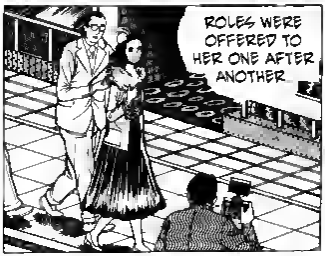
AND SHE WAS LEFT ALL ALONE.

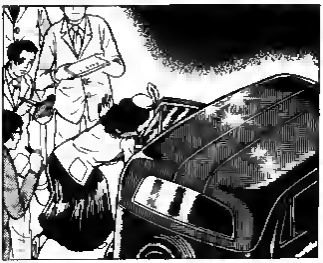
OVER TIME, BOTH HER MOTHER AND FATHER PASSED AWAY...

SOON, SHE BECAME EVEN MORE POPULAR, AND PEOPLE STARTED TO CALL HER AN ETERNAL BEAUTY.

BUT IT DIDN'T SADDEN HER ONE BIT, COMPARED TO THE THOUGHT OF LOSING ALL HER BEAUTY...

TIME AND TIME AGAIN THEY RETURNED TO THE THEATER, ALWAYS SEEKING A GLIMPSE OF THAT MYSTICAL BEAUTY WHICH NEVER FADED.


ROLES WERE OFFERED TO HER ONE AFTER ANOTHER.



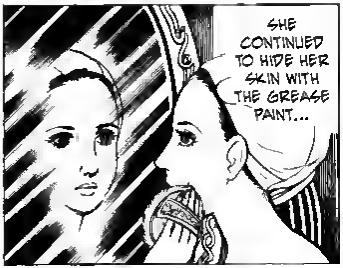
AND SHE FELT COMPELLED TO NEVER LET THEM DOWN.

LIGHTS THAT WERE FAR TOO BRIGHT...

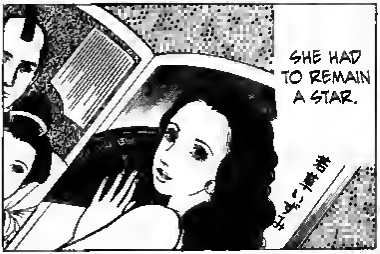
THICK GREASE PAINT...
すみさん

YET SHE WAS ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF LOSING IT!
SHE WAS STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF HER YOUTH,

NO MATTER WHAT SHE DID, SHE WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.


SHE CONTINUED TO HIDE HER SKIN WITH THE GREASE PAINT...

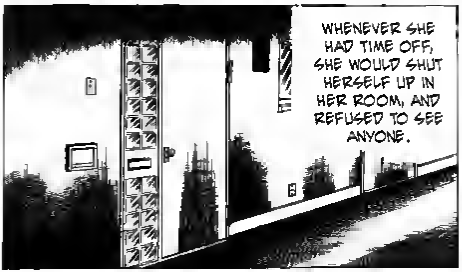
STILL, SHE WOULDN'T ALLOW HERSELF TO STOP WORKING.

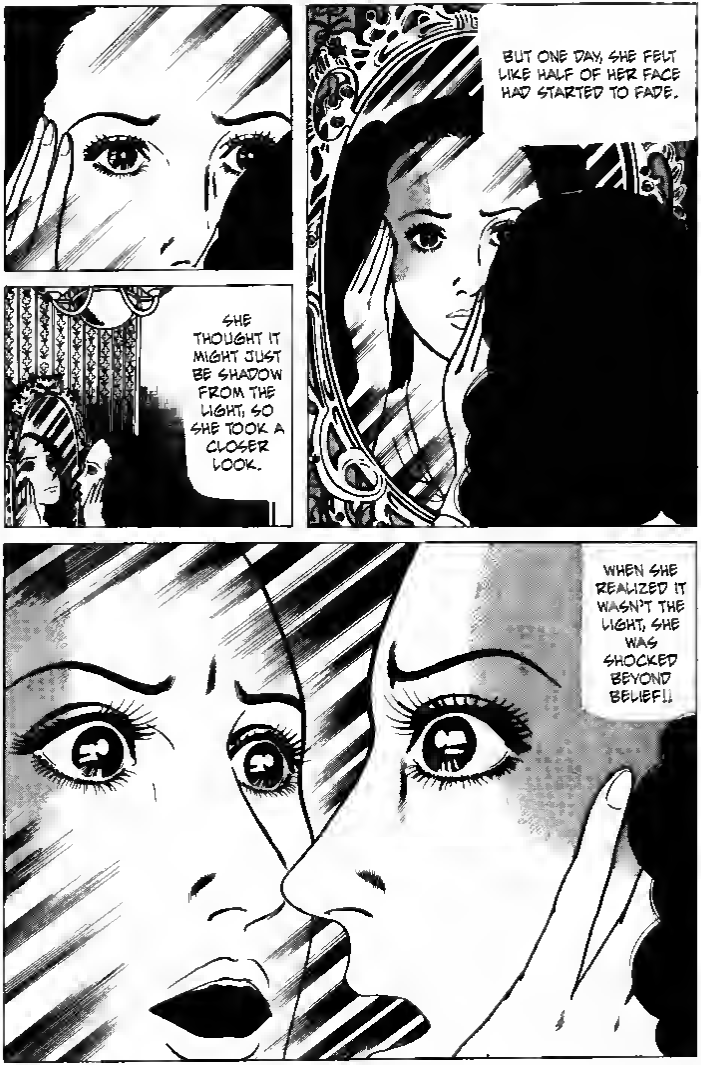

SHE HAD TO REMAIN A STAR.

LETTING THE LIGHTS SHINE DOWN ON HER...

AND AVOIDING PEOPLE.

THAT'S ABOUT THE TIME SHE STARTED WEARING SUNGLASSES...

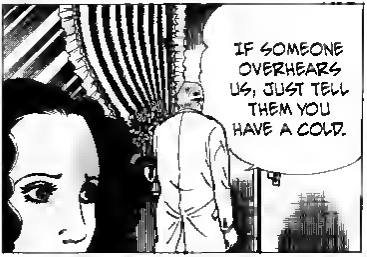

WHENEVER SHE HAD TIME OFF, SHE WOULD SHUT HERSELF UP IN HER ROOM, AND REFUSED TO SEE ANYONE.


BUT ONE DAY, SHE FELT LIKE HALF OF HER FACE HAD STARTED TO FADE.
SHE THOUGHT IT MIGHT JUST BE SHADOW FROM THE LIGHT, SO SHE TOOK A CLOSER LOOK.
WHEN SHE REALIZED IT WASN'T THE LIGHT, SHE WAS SHOCKED BEYOND BELIEF!!

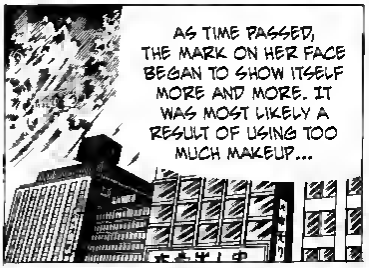
BUT I PROMISE THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU BEFORE LONG.
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO YET.

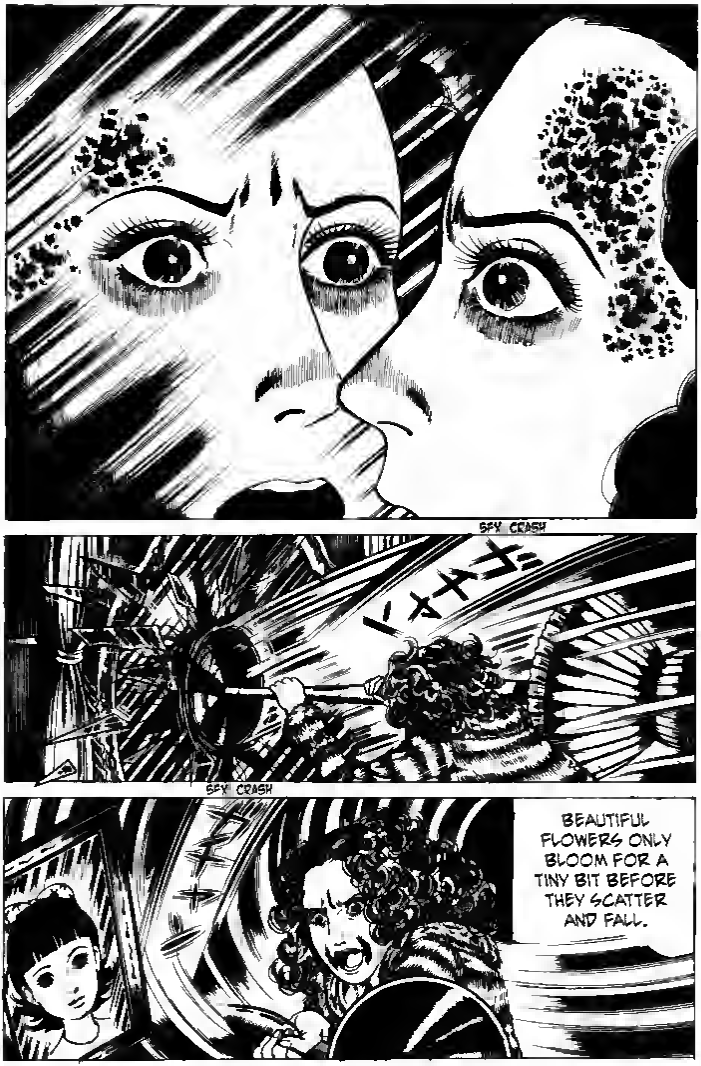
THE CARE OF HER DOCTOR WAS ALL SHE HAD TO RELY ON.

RIGHT NOW, I JUST NEED TO IMMERSE MYSELF IN MY RESEARCH.


IF SOMEONE OVERHEARS US, JUST TELL THEM YOU HAVE A COLD.

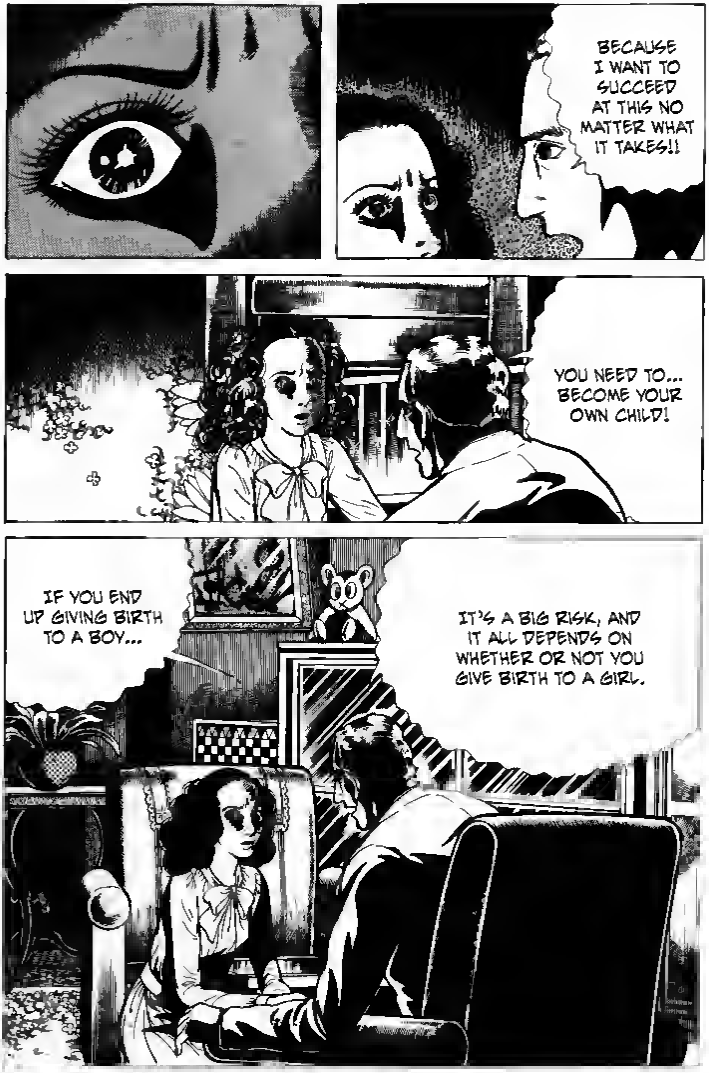
YOUR MAID SHOULD BE HERE SOON, SO I'LL EXCUSE MYSELF.


AS TIME PASSED, THE MARK ON HER FACE BEGAN TO SHOW ITSELF MORE AND MORE. IT WAS MOST LIKELY A RESULT OF USING TOO MUCH MAKEUP...


SFX CRASH
SFX CRASH
BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS ONLY BLOOM FOR A TINY BIT BEFORE THEY SCATTER AND FALL.

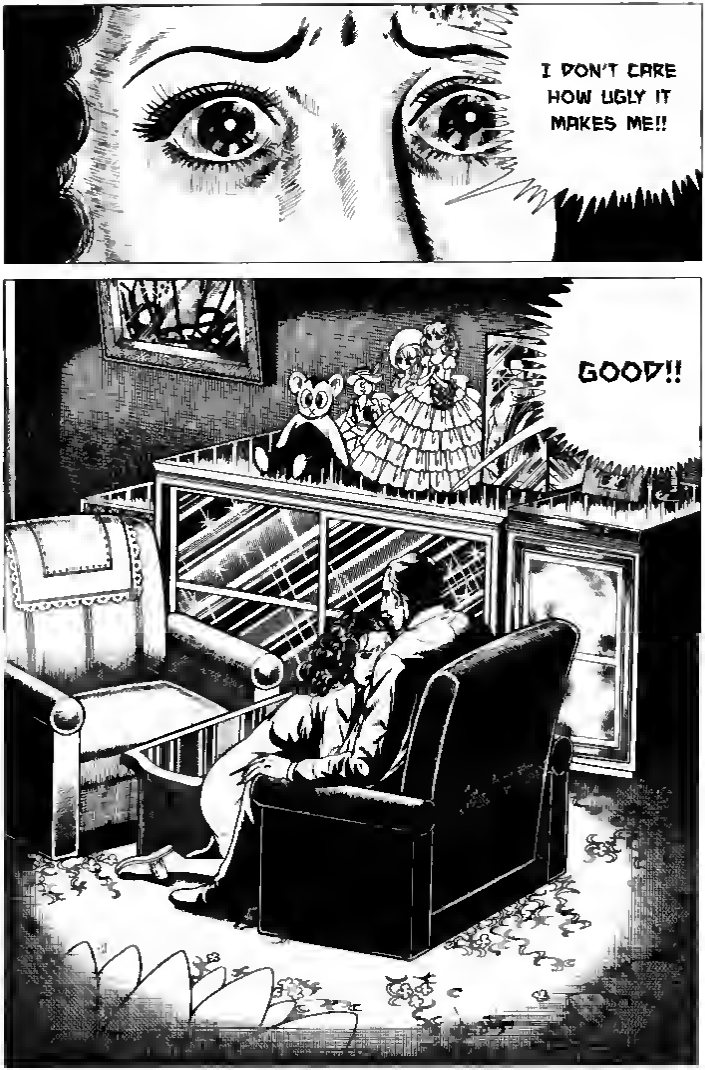
I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO LOSE MY MIND!
DOCTOR!! PLEASE COME AT ONCE! I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER!
SFX: CLING CLING
ジャリ
ジャリ
THAT NIGHT, SHE SPOKE WITH HER DOCTOR UNTIL THE SUN CAME UP.
LISTEN CAREFULLY. THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO SAVE YOU. YOU NEED TO BE REBORN.

YES. YOU NEED TO START LIVING A DIFFERENT LIFE.
REBORN?!
AND IN ORDER TO DO THAT, YOU NEED TO GIVE BIRTH TO A CUTE LITTLE GIRL.
WHAT?!
THEN, WHEN SHE GROWS UP, I'LL REMOVE HER BRAIN AND REPLACE IT WITH YOURS.
DO YOU KNOW WHY I'M STILL YOUR MAIN DOCTOR?


BECAUSE I WANT TO SUCCEED AT THIS NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES!!
YOU NEED TO... BECOME YOUR OWN CHILD!
IF YOU END UP GIVING BIRTH TO A BOY...
IT'S A BIG RISK, AND IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU GIVE BIRTH TO A GIRL.

WELL? DO YOU WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY?
YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM...
YES...

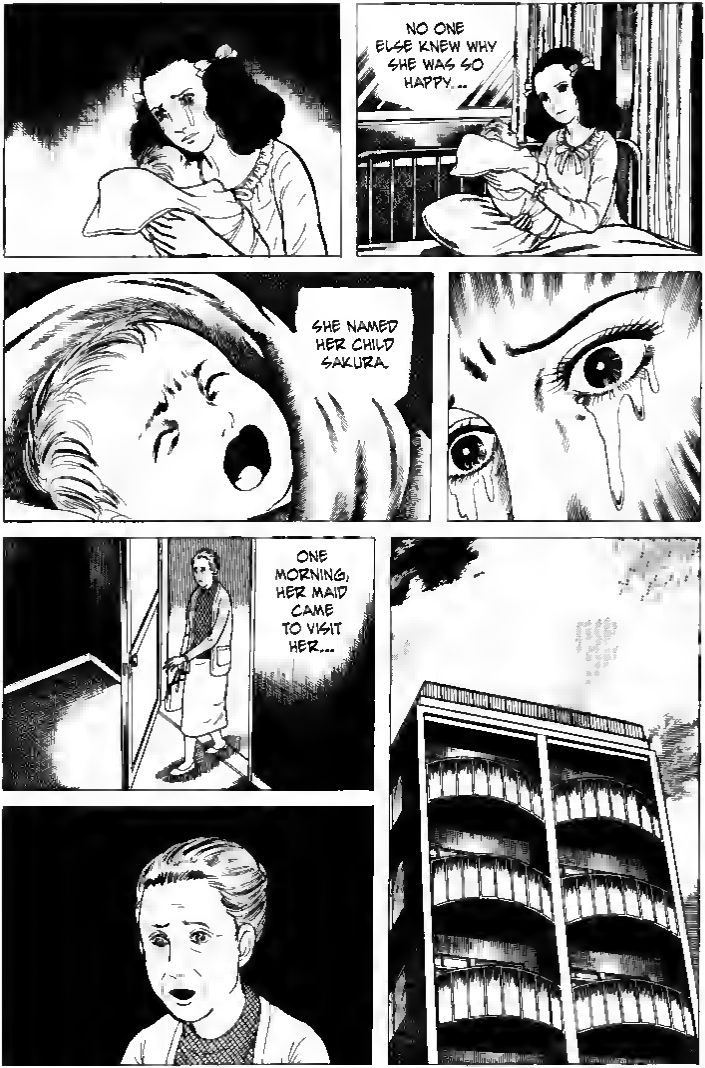
I'LL GIVE BIRTH TO A CUTE GIRL, NO MATTER WHAT!!
UNTIL THE DAY WHEN WE CAN PERFORM THE BRAIN SURGERY!!
AND I'LL TAKE THE UTMOST CARE IN RAISING HER!!


I DON'T CARE HOW UGLY IT MAKES ME!!
GOOD!!

SFX: CLINK X3
ガチ
ガチ
ガチ
D-DON'T TELL ME THAT CHILD ENDED UP BEING...
ガチ
ガチ
SF : CLINK - 2
...SAKURA...

HIEEEE!!
YES.
YOU NEED TO KEEP LISTENING UNTIL THE END.
BUT THE STORY ISN'T OVER YET, RYOUKO.
FINALLY, ONE NIGHT, I WENT OUTSIDE INCOGNITO FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME...

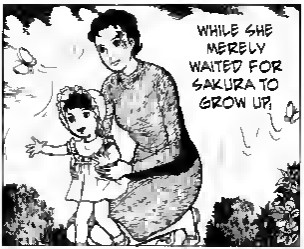
WITH A MAN SHE HAD PICKED UP SOMEWHERE.
IT WAS A GIRL.
EVENTUALLY, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A BABY.
THE JOY SHE FELT AT THAT MOMENT WAS INDESCRIBABLE!! IT WAS THE GIRL SHE HAD BEEN WAITING FOR!

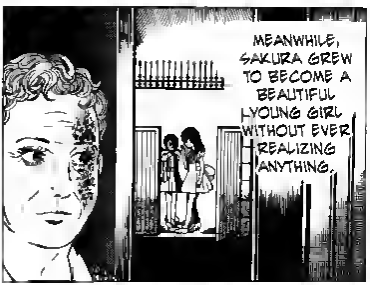

NO ONE ELSE KNEW WHY SHE WAS SO HAPPY...
SHE NAMED HER CHILD SAKURA.
ONE MORNING, HER MAID CAME TO VISIT HER...

BUT ALL SHE FOUND WAS AN EMPTY ROOM.
AND NO LONGER HAD ANY REASON TO HIDE HER UGLINESS.
SHE WAS ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF MOVING TO A NEW TOWN.
AND HER DOCTOR HAD COME WITH HER.
THERE WASN'T A SINGLE PERSON IN THIS TOWN WHO WOULD RECOGNIZE HER AS A FAMOUS STAR.

AN OLD, PRIVATE MANSION ON THE EDGE OF TOWN.
THAT'S HOW SHE ARRIVED AT THIS HOUSE...

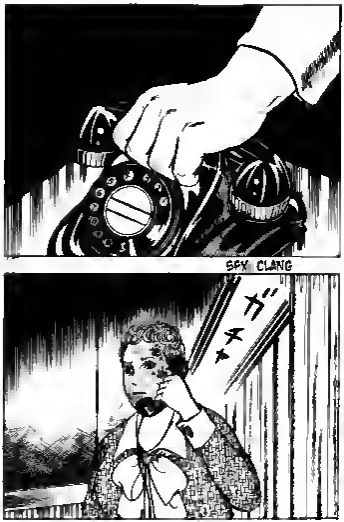
ON THE SECOND FLOOR, THE DOCTOR CONTINUED HIS LIVE EXPERIMENTS,


WHILE SHE MERELY WAITED FOR SAKURA TO GROW UP.


MEANWHILE, SAKURA GREW TO BECOME A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRL WITHOUT EVER REALIZING ANYTHING.

WATCHING OVER HER WITH GREY EYES...

BUT, PERHAPS BECAUSE SHE HAD REALIZED SOMETHING, SAKURA NEVER DARED TO GO UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR.


SFX: CLANG
ガ"
THEN, THE DAY FINALLY CAME!!
HER MOTHER BOUGHT SAKURA A HAT IN ORDER TO MEASURE HER HEAD SIZE.
I DON'T THINK I CAN WAIT UNTIL THE DAY WE AGREED ON. IT SEEMS LIKE SAKURA'S ALREADY BIG ENOUGH, SO WE SHOULD TRANSPLANT MY BRAIN INTO HERS AT ONCE!!
DOCTOR... ABOUT WHAT WE SPOKE OF...
THEN SAKURA'S BEAUTIFUL FACE AND BODY WILL BE ALL MINE! DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS?! THIS IS WHY I WORKED SO HARD TO RAISE HER WITHOUT EVER LETTING HER GET INJURED...

IT'S ALSO WHY I WAS ABLE TO RETAIN MY SANITY FOR SO LONG!! ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME, DOCTOR?!
THAT'S THE REASON I GAVE BIRTH TO HER IN THE FIRST PLACE!!
IS-IS THAT YOU?! W-WERE YOU LISTENING TO ME JUST NOW, SAKURA?!
HELLO?!
SAKURA!!

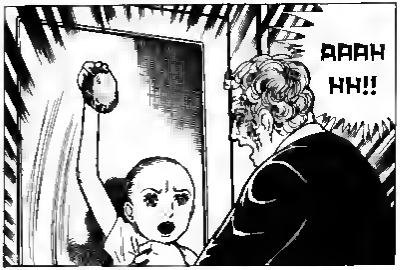
SFX: CLANG
ガチャン
AAH HH!!
HMPH!!
SFX: HO X3
ホッ
ホッ
ホッ
EVERYTHING I SAID JUST NOW WAS THE TRUTH, SAKURA! THAT'S WHY I GAVE BIRTH TO YOU!!

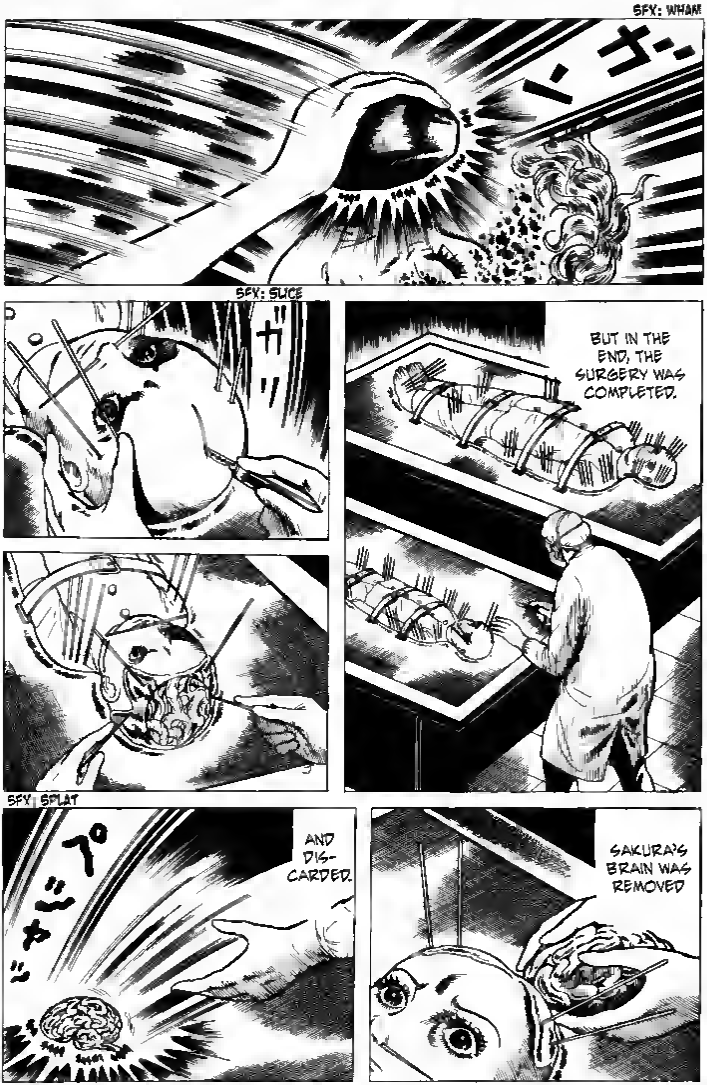
AT THE TIME, SAKURA HAD BEEN PUT TO SLEEP WITH ANESTHESIA.

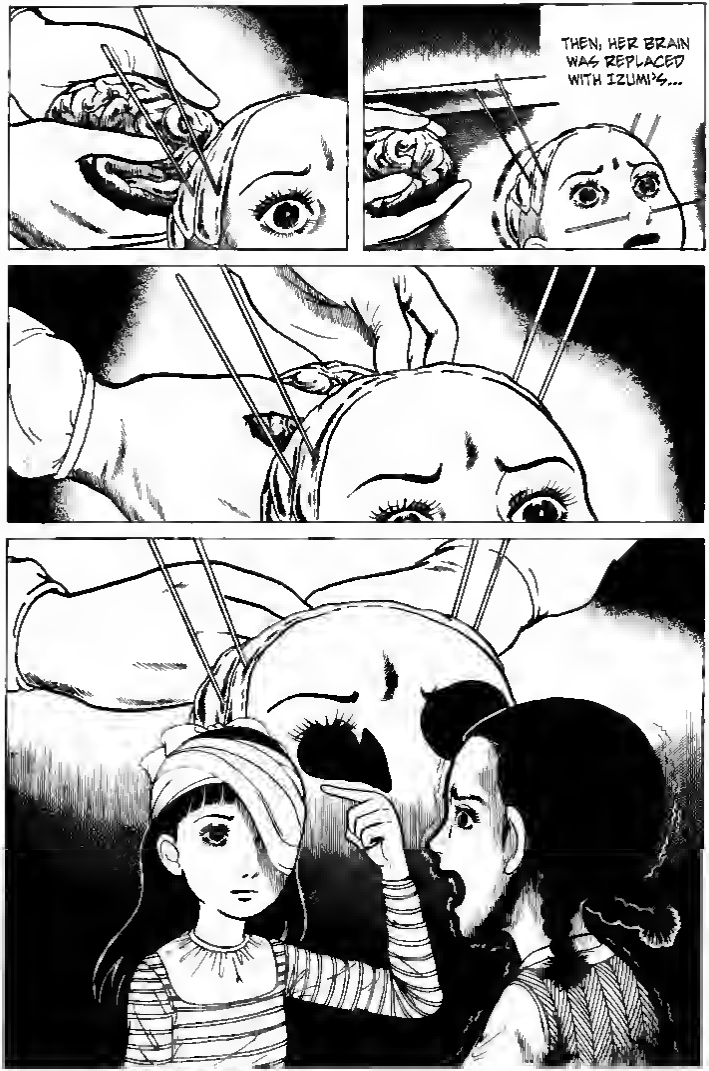
THEN YOU CAME TO VISIT, RYOUKO.

SAKURA PUT FORTH AN UNBELIEVABLE AMOUNT OF RESISTANCE.

SOON AFTER, THE SURGERY FINALLY BEGAN!!
UUUU!!

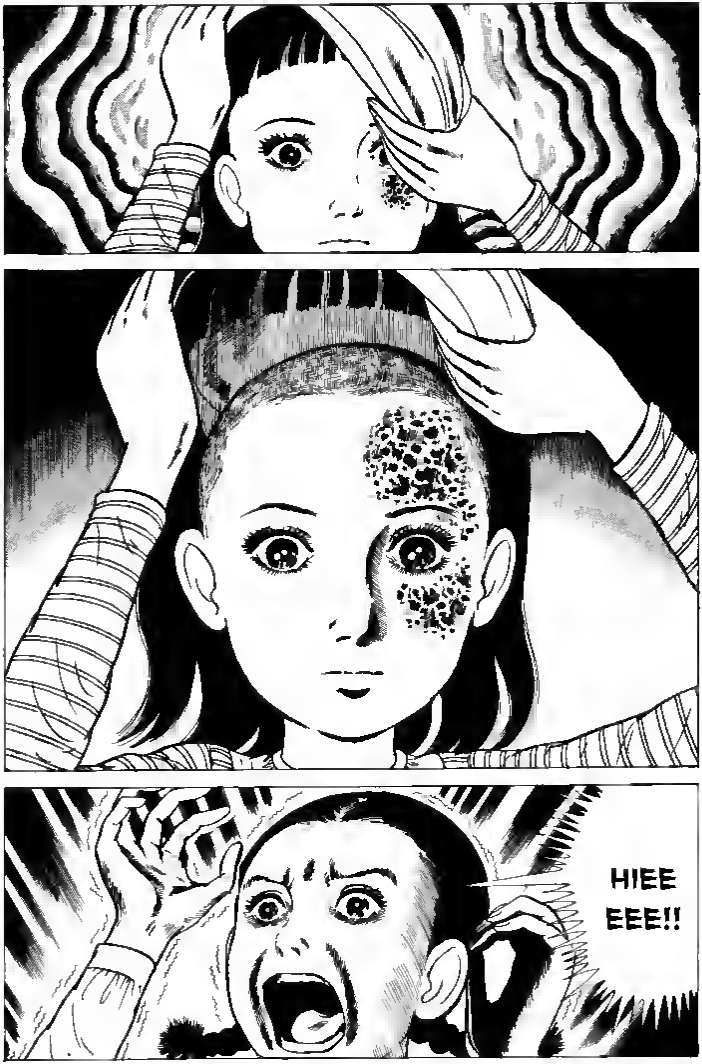

AAAH HH!!


SFX: WHAM
SFX: SLICE
BUT IN THE END, THE SURGERY WAS COMPLETED.
SFX: SPLAT
AND DIS-CARDED.
SAKURA'S BRAIN WAS REMOVED

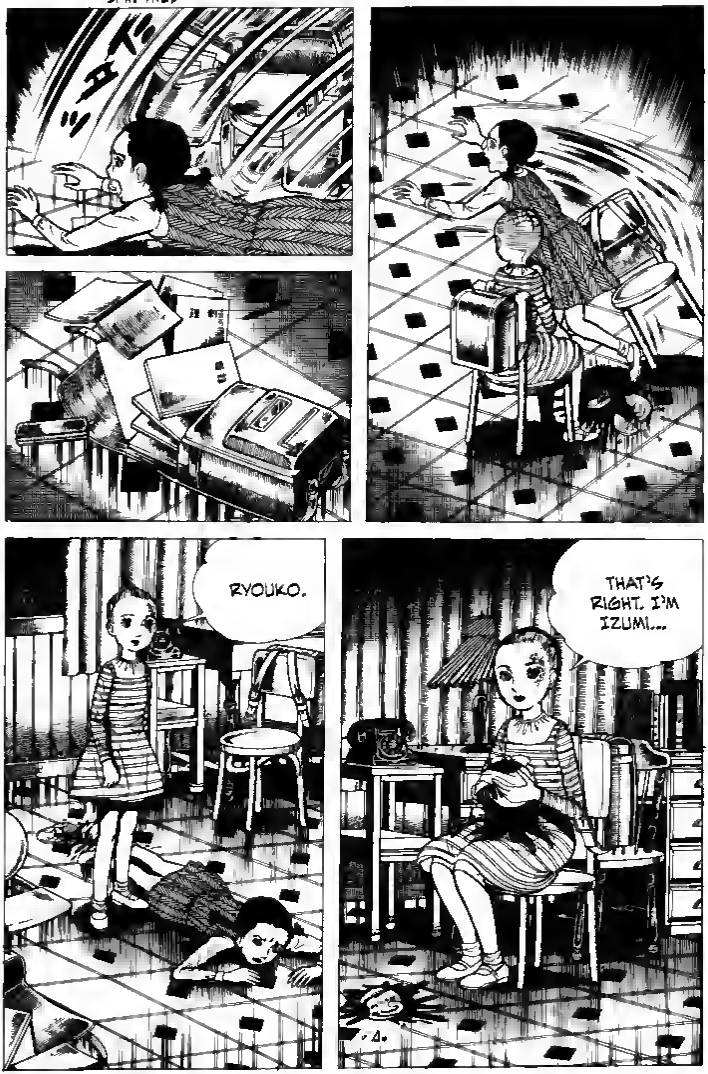

THEN, HER BRAIN WAS REPLACED WITH IZUMI'S...

YES. IT'S IN HERE...
HE PUT IT RIGHT INSIDE THIS HEAD.
SFX: CRASH
ガチャーン

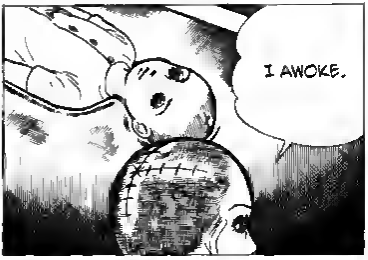
IT-IT CAN'T BE...
TH-THEN THAT MEANS YOU'RE ...!!

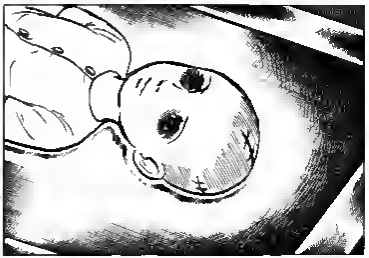

HIEE
EEE!!

THIS IS THE SCAR FROM THE SURGERY.

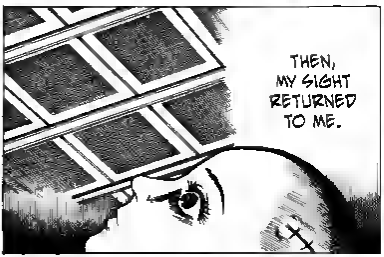

SFX: THUD
"ハァ"
RYOUKO.
THAT'S RIGHT. I'M IZUMI...
...A...

YOU'RE SAKURA'S FRIEND, REMEMBER...
YOU'LL HELP ME, WON'T YOU?
THE STORY ISN'T OVER YET...
LISTEN TO WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARD.

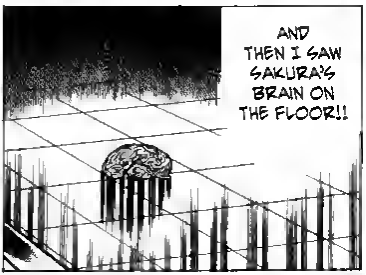

I AWOKE.

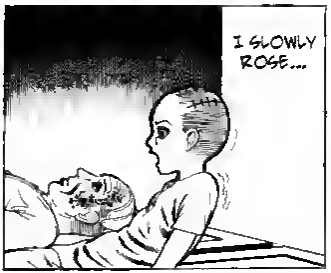


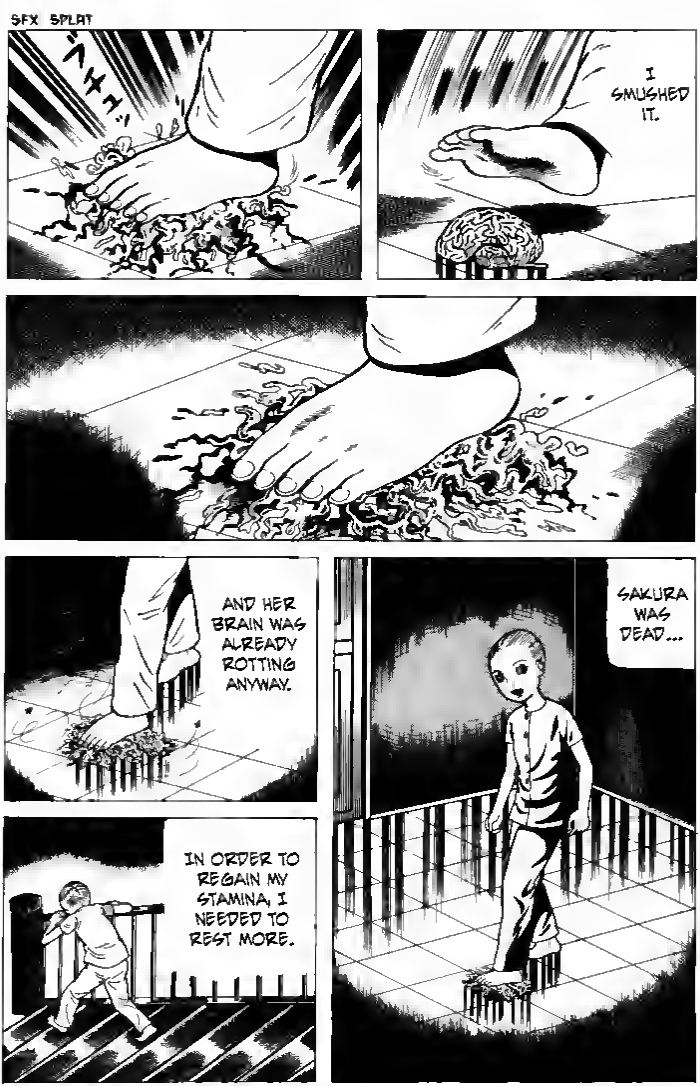
SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE SURGERY...

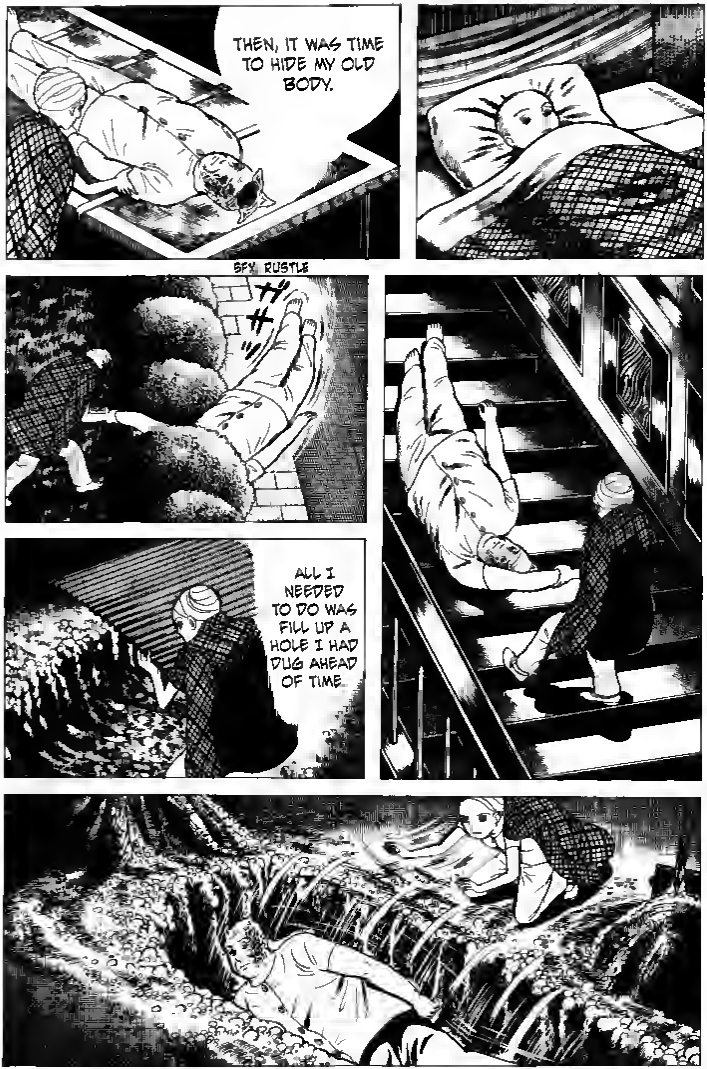

THEN, MY SIGHT RETURNED TO ME.

AT FIRST, I COULDN'T REALLY SEE WHERE I WAS.


AND THEN I SAW SAKURA'S BRAIN ON THE FLOOR!!


I SLOWLY ROSE...


SFX SPLAT
I SMUSHED IT.
AND HER BRAIN WAS ALREADY ROTTING ANYWAY.
SAKURA WAS DEAD...
IN ORDER TO REGAIN MY STAMINA, I NEEDED TO REST MORE.


THEN, IT WAS TIME TO HIDE MY OLD BODY.
SFX: RUSTLE
ALL I NEEDED TO DO WAS FILL UP A HOLE I HAD DUG AHEAD OF TIME.

THEN I HAD TO GET RID OF ALL THE ANIMAL CORPSES ON THE SECOND.
I BURIED THEM ALL IN A DIFFERENT HOLE IN THE GARDEN.

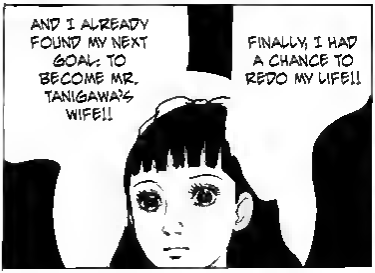
SO I DUMPED THE REST IN A RIVER, THAT

BUT I WASN'T ABLE TO COVER THEM ALL UP.

THEN, AFTER CLEANING EVERYTHING UP, I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL.

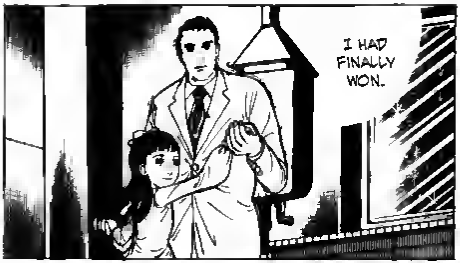
IT ALSO TOOK ME A LOT OF TIME TO DESTROY THE OPERATING TABLES AND CLEAN ALL THE BLOOD OFF THE FLOOR.

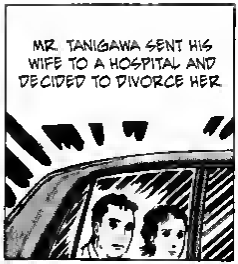
BUT I WAS MOST WORRIED ABOUT YOU RYOUKO!
I HAD BEEN INVESTIGATING SAKURA'S HABITS AND OTHER THINGS ABOUT HER FOR QUITE SOME TIME.


AND I ALREADY FOUND MY NEXT GOAL: TO BECOME MR. TANIGAWA'S WIFE!!
FINALLY, I HAD A CHANCE TO REDO MY LIFE!!

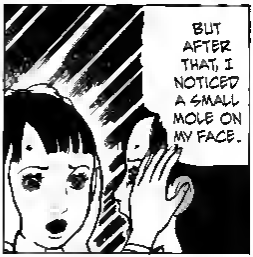
BUT YOU WERE SO NICE THAT YOU DIDN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING AT ALL.

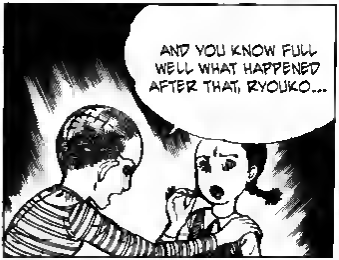
BUT THAT ONLY HARDENED MY RESOLVE.
WHEN I FOUND THAT OUT, I WAS SO SURPRISED... AND ANGRY!!
BUT MR. TANIGAWA ALREADY HAD A WIFE...
I KEPT FRAMING MR. TANIGAWA'S WIFE FOR THINGS IN ORDER TO GET CLOSER TO HIM.
I WAS THE ONE WHO PUT THAT ROTTEN STUFF IN THE SOUP WHEN EVERY-ONE GOT SICK AT THE BIRTHDAY PARTY!!
EVENTUALLY SHE HAD A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN, AND HER RELATIONSHIP WITH MR. TANIGAWA DETERIORATED.
I'M ALSO THE ONE WHO LEFT THE GAS ON.
WHENEVER HE WAS GONE, I DID EVERYTHING I COULD TO TORMENT HER.
MEANWHILE, I INNOCENTLY SEDUCED HIM.


I HAD FINALLY WON.


MR. TANIGAWA SENT HIS WIFE TO A HOSPITAL AND DECIDED TO DIVORCE HER

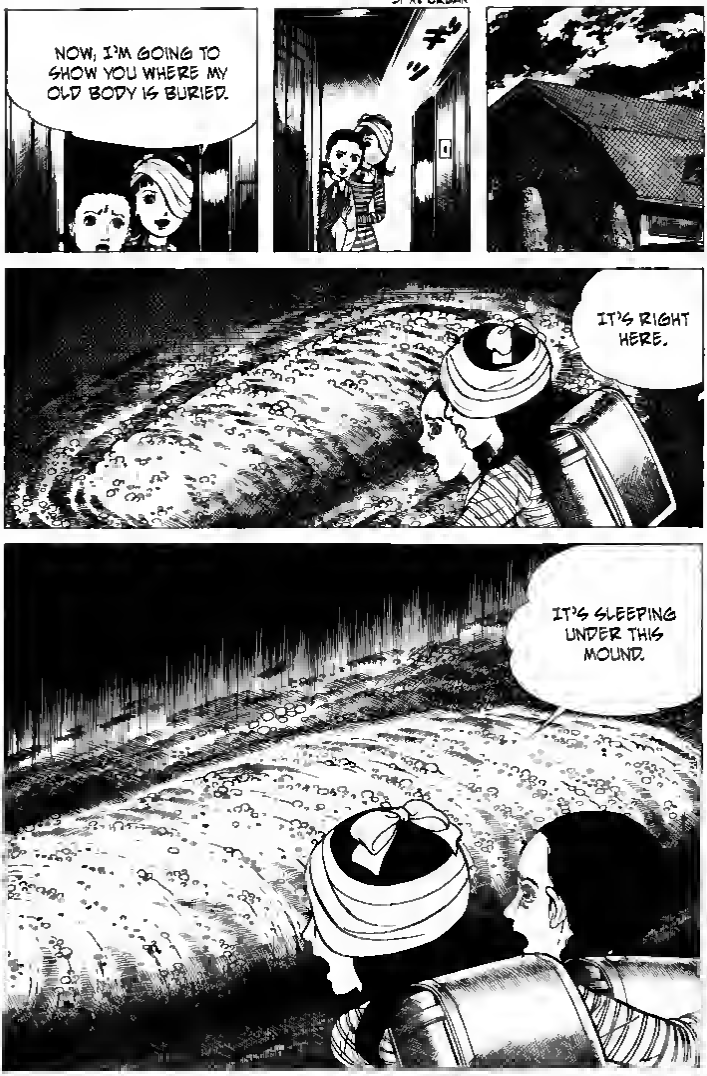
SOON, IT SPREAD OUT AND STARTED TO TURN BACK INTO MY OLD MARK.


BUT AFTER THAT, I NOTICED A SMALL MOLE ON MY FACE.


AND YOU KNOW FULL WELL WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT, RYOUKO...

THE VICTORY I THOUGHT I HAD ACHIEVED REGARDING MR. TANIGAWA WAS NOTHING BUT AN ILLUSION.

I NEED TO BECOME HIS WIFE!!
AND THEY'RE BOTH SUSPICIOUS OF ME!
HE STILL LOVES HIS WIFE, EVEN NOW.
I ONLY HAVE ONE MORE OPTION NOW.
RYOUKO, I NEED YOU TO TRICK HIS WIFE INTO COMING HERE!


NOW, I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU WHERE MY OLD BODY IS BURIED.
SFX: CREAK
キィ
ッ
IT'S RIGHT HERE.
IT'S SLEEPING UNDER THIS MOUND.

THIS IS WHERE MY BODY IS...
NOW, RYOUKO, I'VE TOLD YOU ALL MY SECRETS.
THE SURGERY WILL BE DONE TOMORROW.

SFX: CLICK
I'LL TELL YOU THE DETAILS TOMORROW AFTER SCHOOL.
YOU NEED TO BRING HER HERE BY THEN.
LOOK CLOSELY. I'M GOING TO HIDE THE KEY IN HERE.
DON'T FORGET WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TOMORROW, RYOUKO...

SO I TOLD HIM THAT SHE SHOULD BE SENDING A LETTER SOON.
HE ASKED ME HOW MY MOTHER WAS DOING.

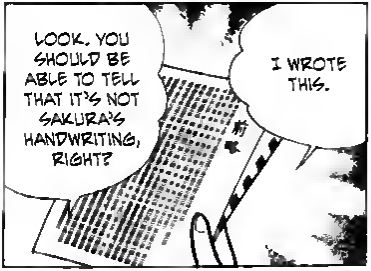
IT SEEMS LIKE MR. TANIGAWA DOESN'T TRUST ME AT ALL.

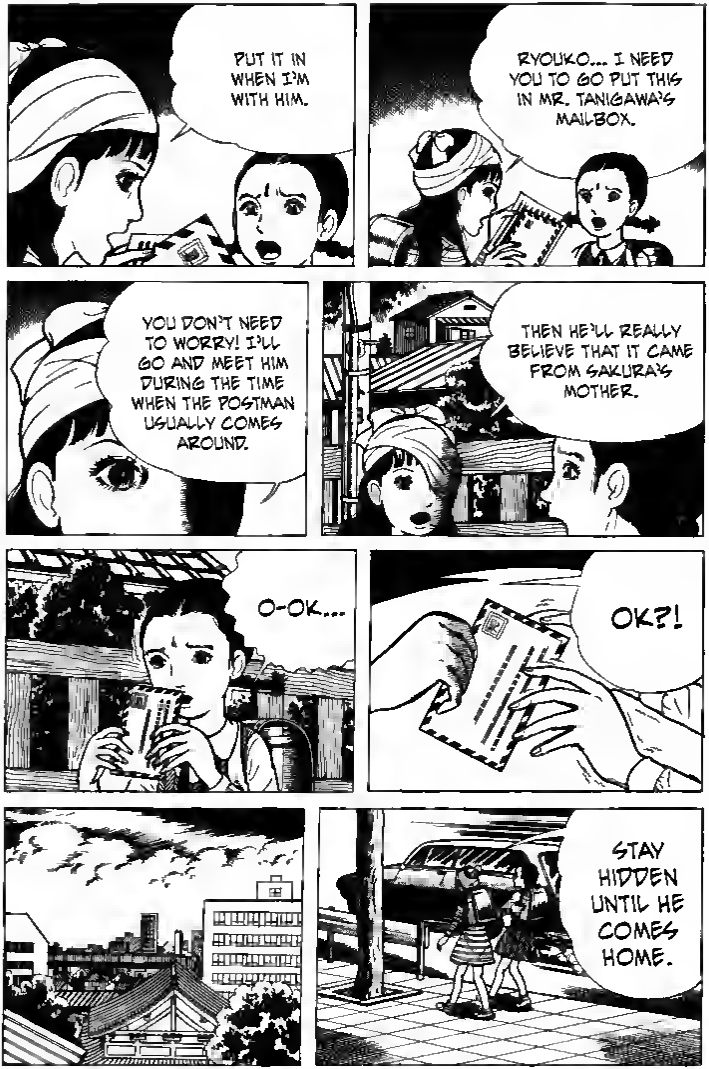
I THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE THIS MIGHT HAPPEN, SO I PREPARED ONE AHEAD OF TIME.

I DOUBT HE'LL NOTICE WHAT HE REALLY IS, BUT I NEED TO COVER ALL MY BASES.

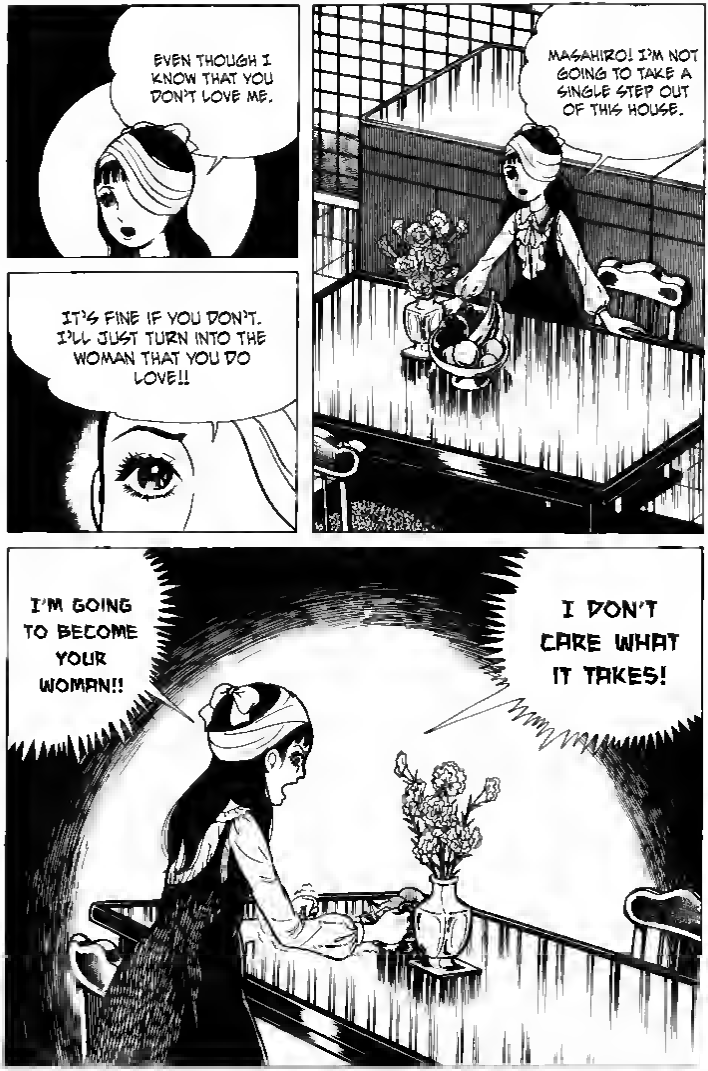
LOOK. IT'S A LETTER SENT FROM OVERSEAS.

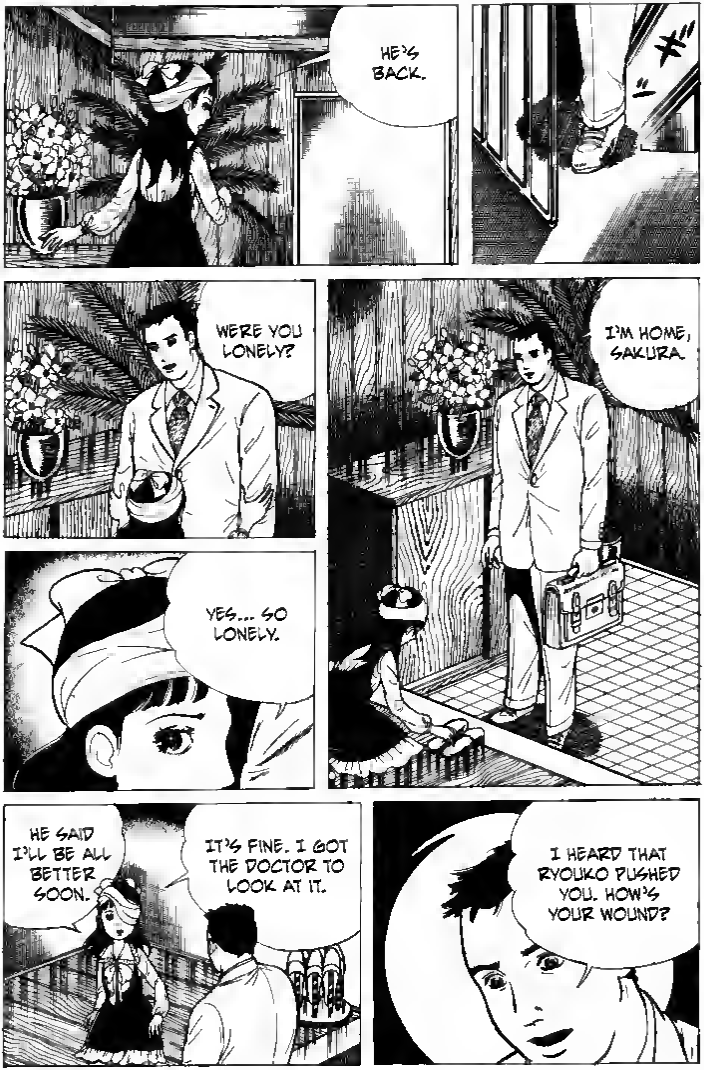
THEY SELL FOREIGN STAMPS AT THE DEPARTMENT STORE. I JUST HAD A STAMP STORE APPLY IT.


LOOK. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO TELL THAT IT'S NOT SAKURA'S HANDWRITING, RIGHT?
I WROTE THIS.

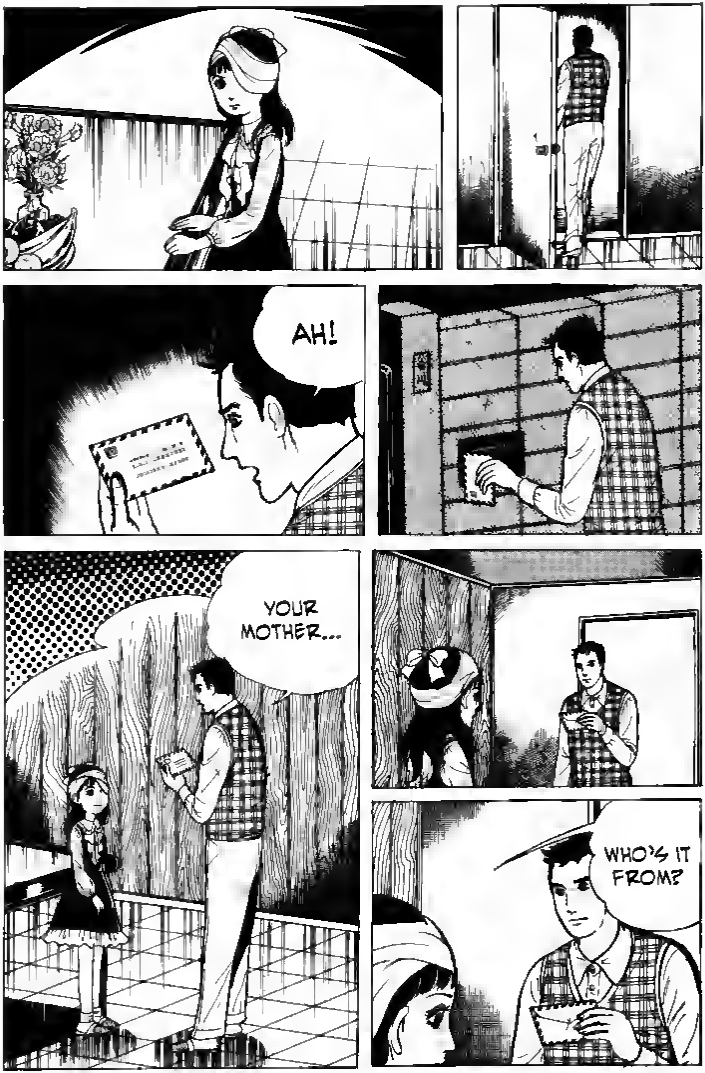

PUT IT IN WHEN I'M WITH HIM.
RYOUKO... I NEED YOU TO GO PUT THIS IN MR. TANIGAWA'S MAILBOX.
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY! I'LL GO AND MEET HIM DURING THE TIME WHEN THE POSTMAN USUALLY COMES AROUND.
THEN HE'LL REALLY BELIEVE THAT IT CAME FROM SAKURA'S MOTHER.
O-OK...
OK?!
STAY HIDDEN UNTIL HE COMES HOME.

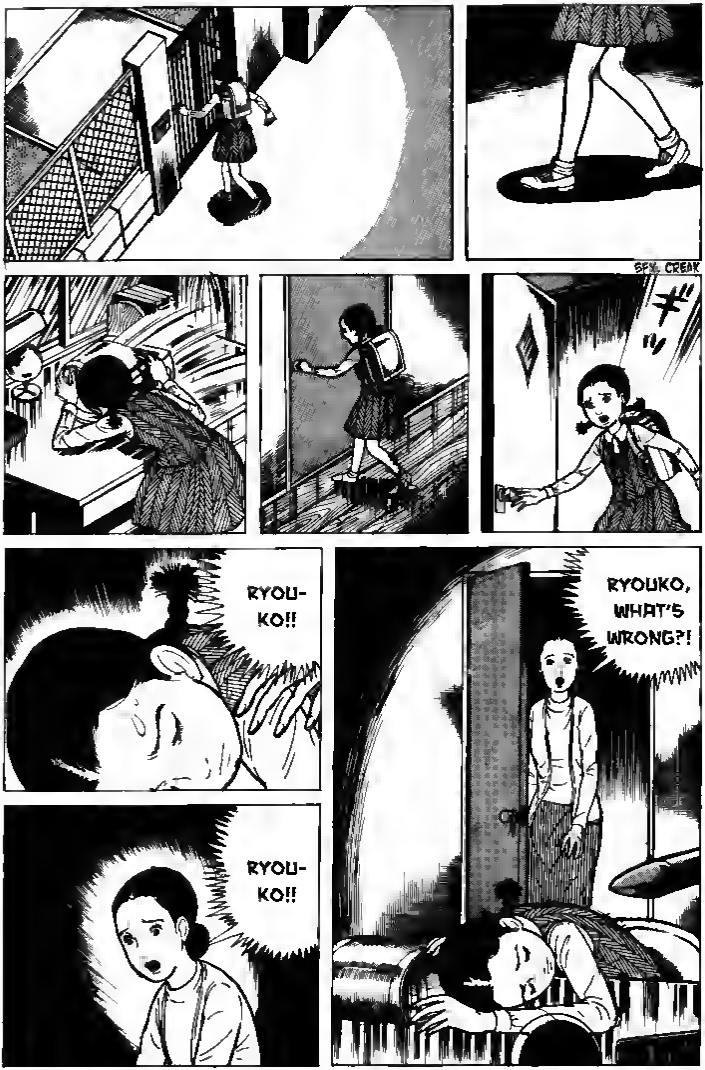
JUST HIDE BACK HERE, RYOUKO.
MAKE SURE NO ONE SEES YOU, OK?
SEV. CLICK
GOOD. HE STILL ISN'T HOME YET.
I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR FRIEND
RYOUKO! I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF PERSON YOU ARE. YOU CAN'T BETRAY SAKURA.


EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THAT YOU DON'T LOVE ME.
MASAHIRO! I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE A SINGLE STEP OUT OF THIS HOUSE.
IT'S FINE IF YOU DON'T. I'LL JUST TURN INTO THE WOMAN THAT YOU DO LOVE!!
I'M GOING TO BECOME YOUR WOMAN!!
I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES!


HE'S BACK.
SFX: CREAK
WERE YOU LONELY?
I'M HOME, SAKURA.
YES... SO LONELY.
HE SAID I'LL BE ALL BETTER SOON.
IT'S FINE. I GOT THE DOCTOR TO LOOK AT IT.
I HEARD THAT RYOUKO PUSHED YOU. HOW'S YOUR WOUND?

THANK YOU.
ONCE YOU CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES, I'LL PUT SOME TEA ON.
DID YOU GET ANY MAIL?
SFX: CLANG
NO.
OK.
COULD YOU GO TAKE A LOOK FOR ME?
MAYBE THAT WAS THE MAIL JUST NOW.


AH!
YOUR MOTHER...
WHO'S IT FROM?


SFX: CREAK
RYOU-KO!!
RYOUKO, WHAT'S WRONG?!
RYOU-KO!!

LIE DOWN!!
I'LL BRING YOUR MEDICINE IN!
BUT...
NO! I DON'T WANT ANY!
I'M FINE, MOTHER! I'M JUST TIRED!

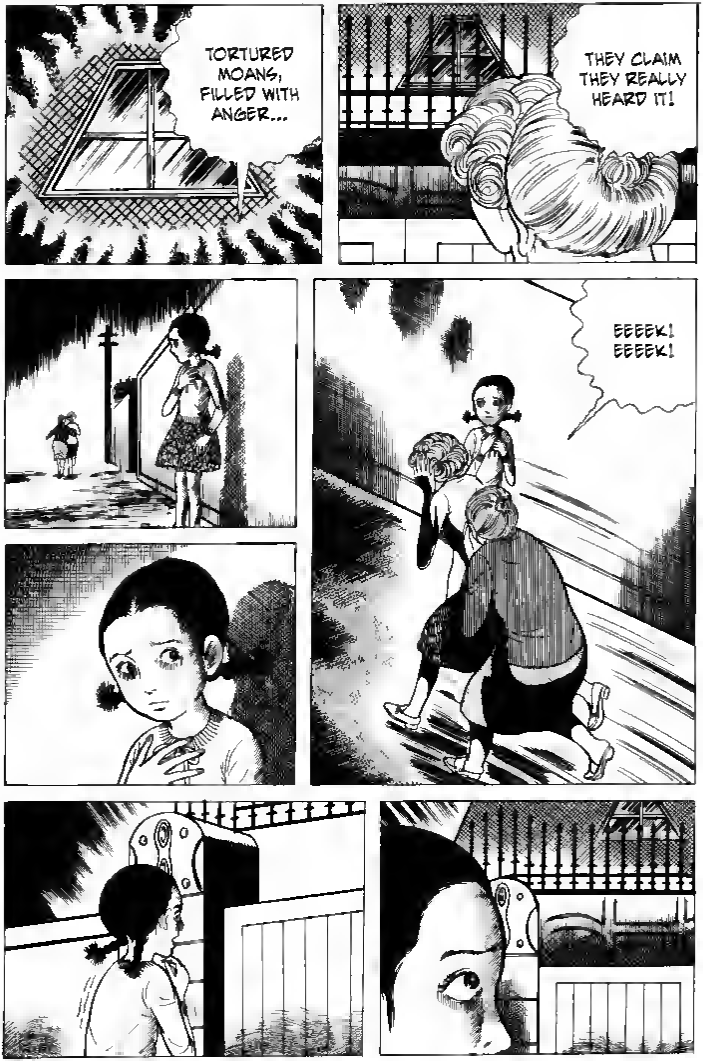
I'M NOT SAKURA.
SFX: CREAK
COME UP HERE, RYOUKO.
IT TOOK ME SO LONG TO CLEAN UP ALL THE BLOOD.
THIS IS WHERE THE SURGERY WAS DONE.

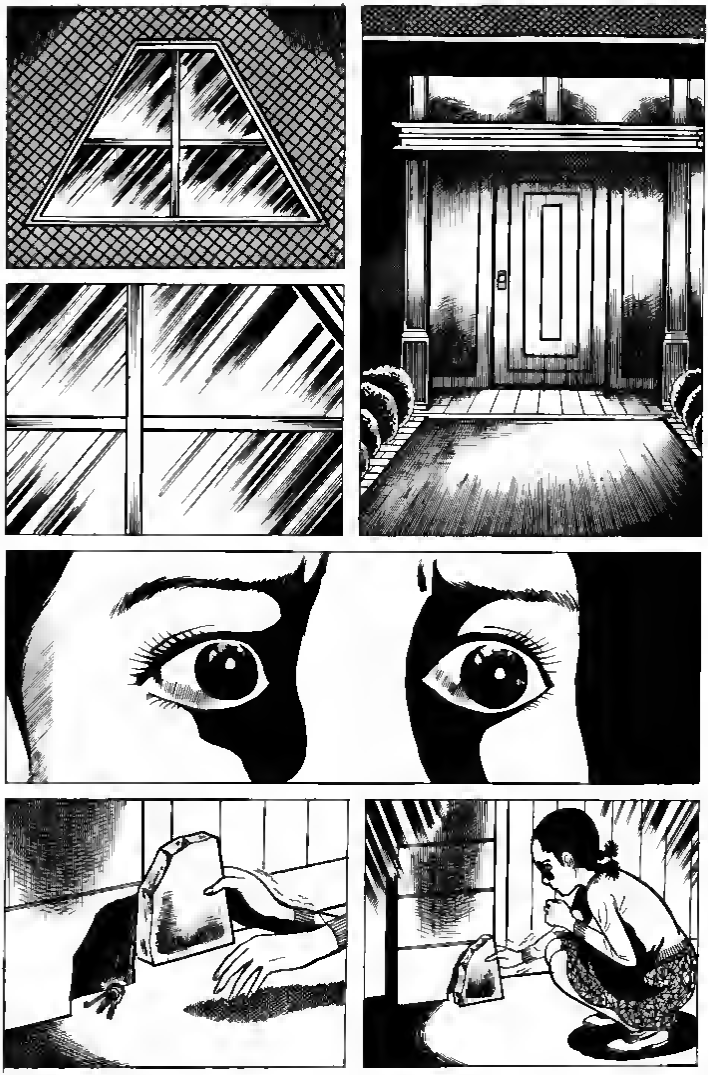
AND ALL THE ANIMAL CORPSES ARE BURIED UNDER THIS TREE.
I CAN'T... I CAN'T TELL ANYONE!
I'M COMING...
RYOUKO, DINNER'S READY.

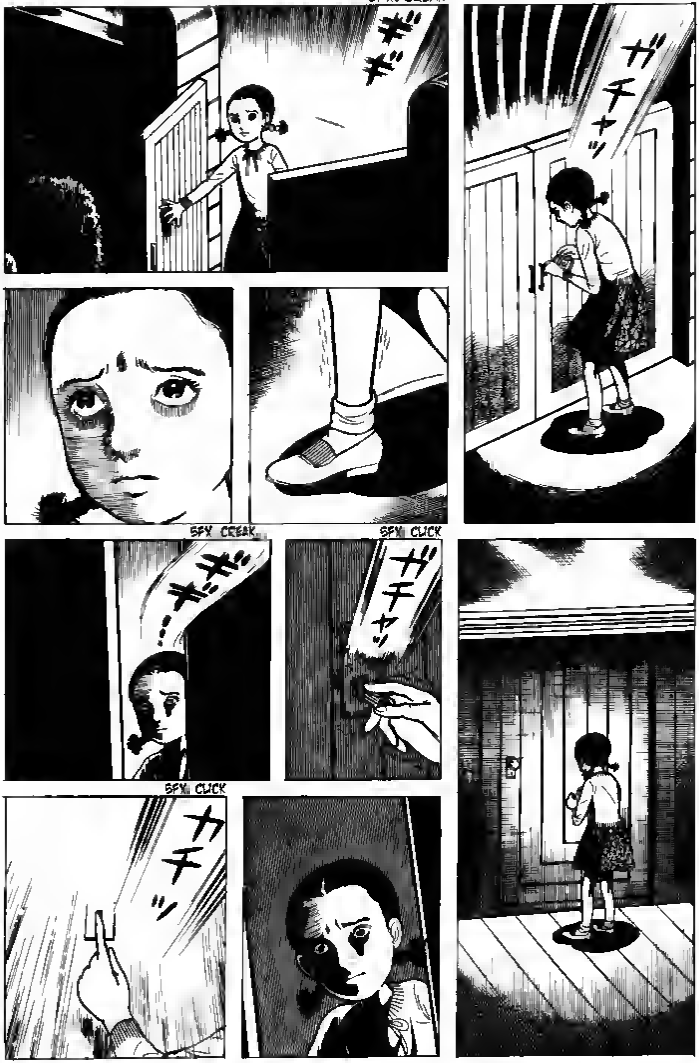
THANK YOU FOR THE MEAL, MOTHER.
コト…
I NEED TO START STUDY-ING.
YES.
YOU'RE ALREADY FULL?
I NEED TO ACT NORMAL, OR MY MOTHER WILL CATCH ON.
I-I MUST HAVE LOST IT WHEN I COLLAPSED AT SAKURA'S HOUSE...
I BORROWED IT FROM MY FATHER WITHOUT ASKING HIM!!
AHH! WHERE'S MY FOUNTAIN PEN?!

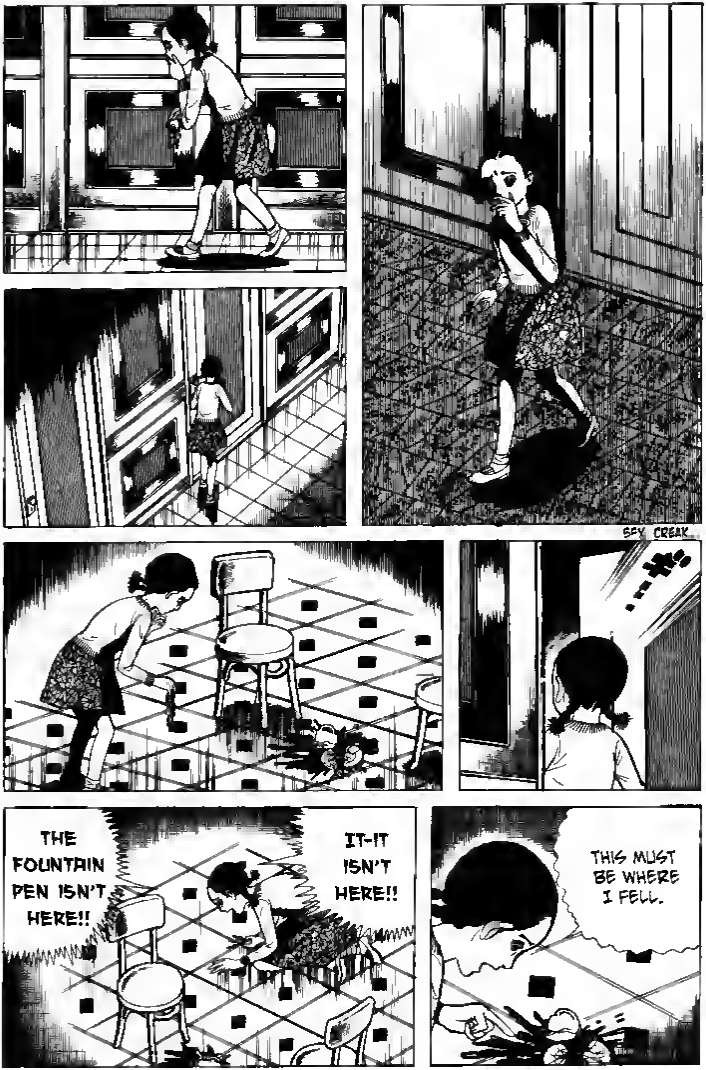
MOTHER, I'M GOING OUT FOR A WALK.
YES.
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OK?

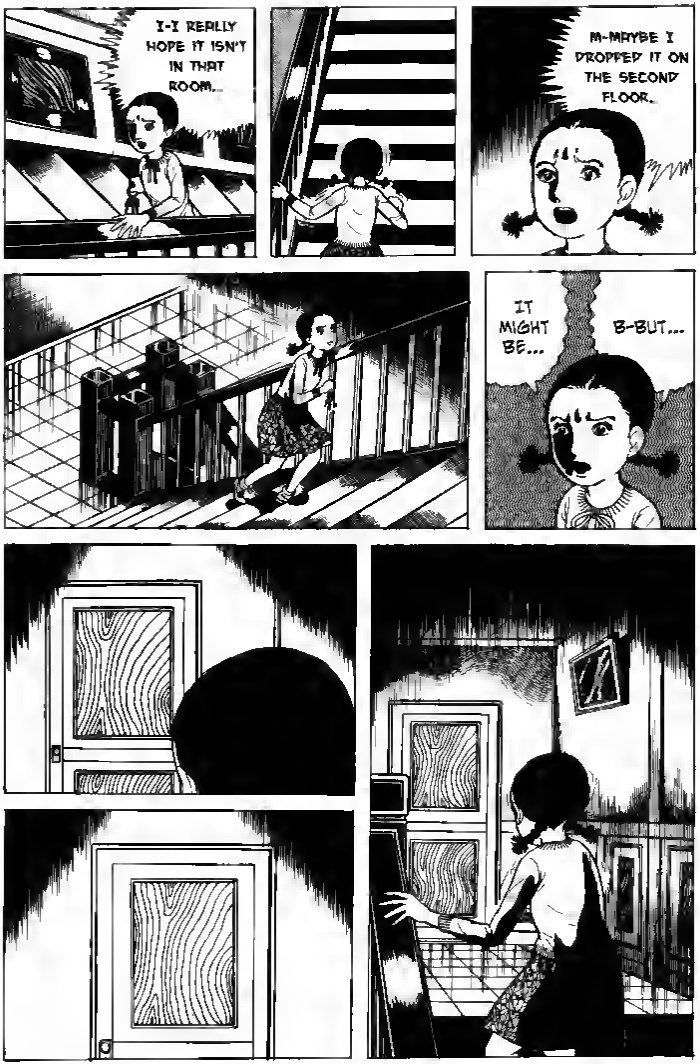
THIS IS THE HOUSE... THEY SAY IT'S HAUNTED NOW.
APPARENTLY SOME PEOPLE HEARD TORTURED MOANS FROM INSIDE...

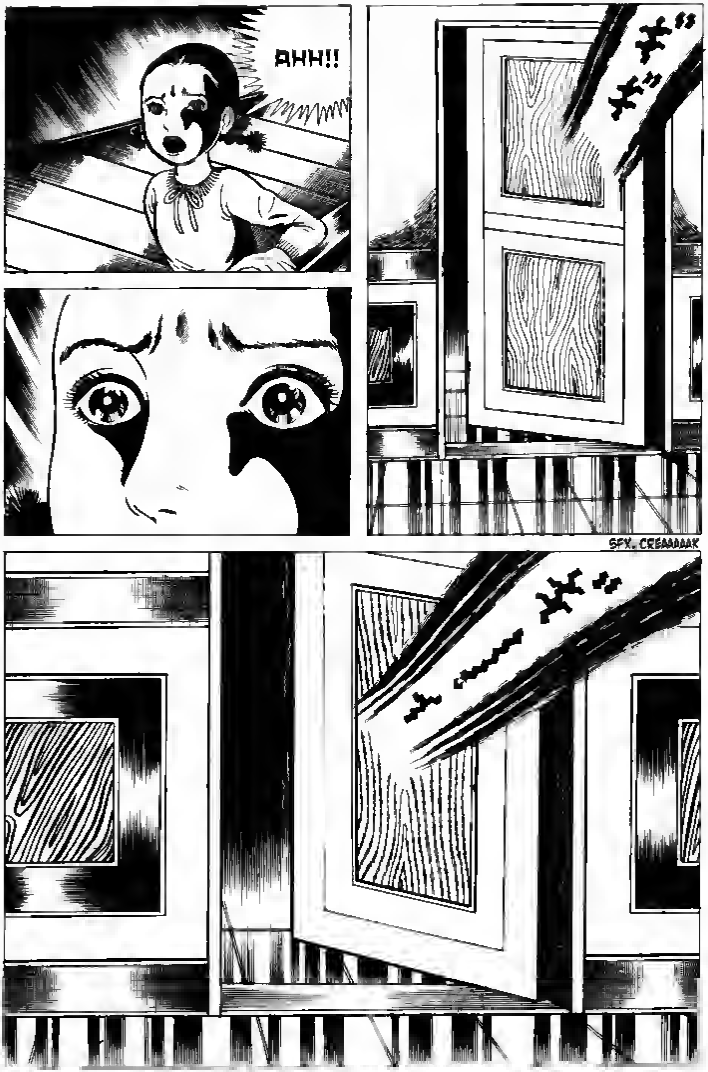

TORTURED MOANS, FILLED WITH ANGER...
THEY CLAIM THEY REALLY HEARD IT!
EEEEK! EEEEK!

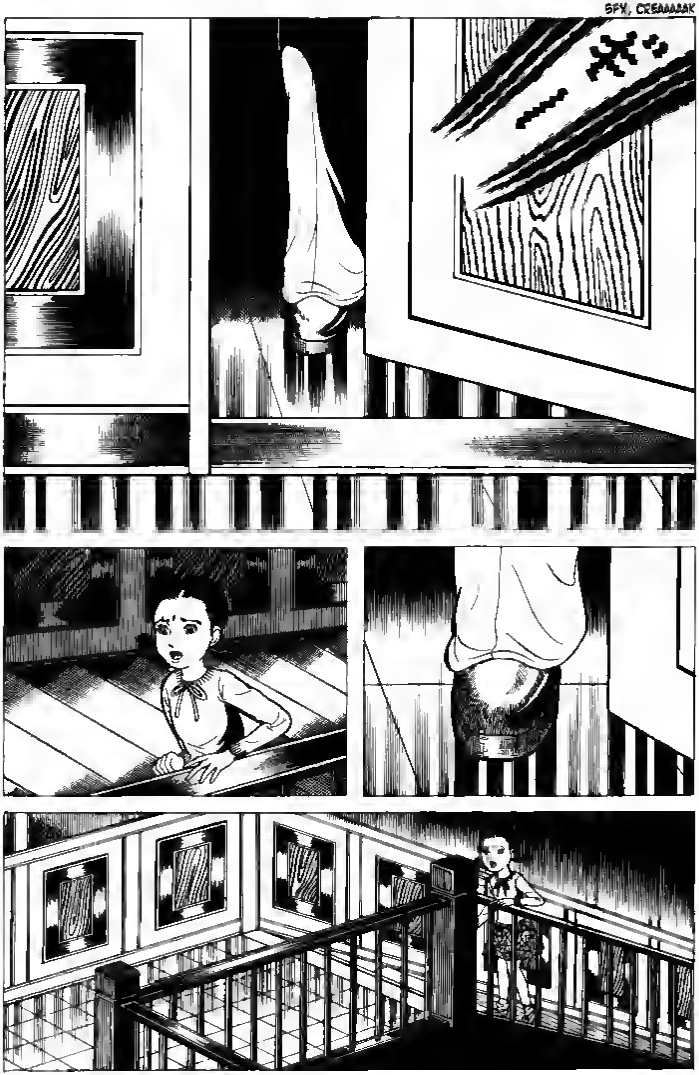



SFX: CREAK
ギギ
SFX: CLICK
ガチャッ
SFX: CREAK
ギギ!!
SFX: CLICK
ガチャッ
SFX: CLICK
カチッ

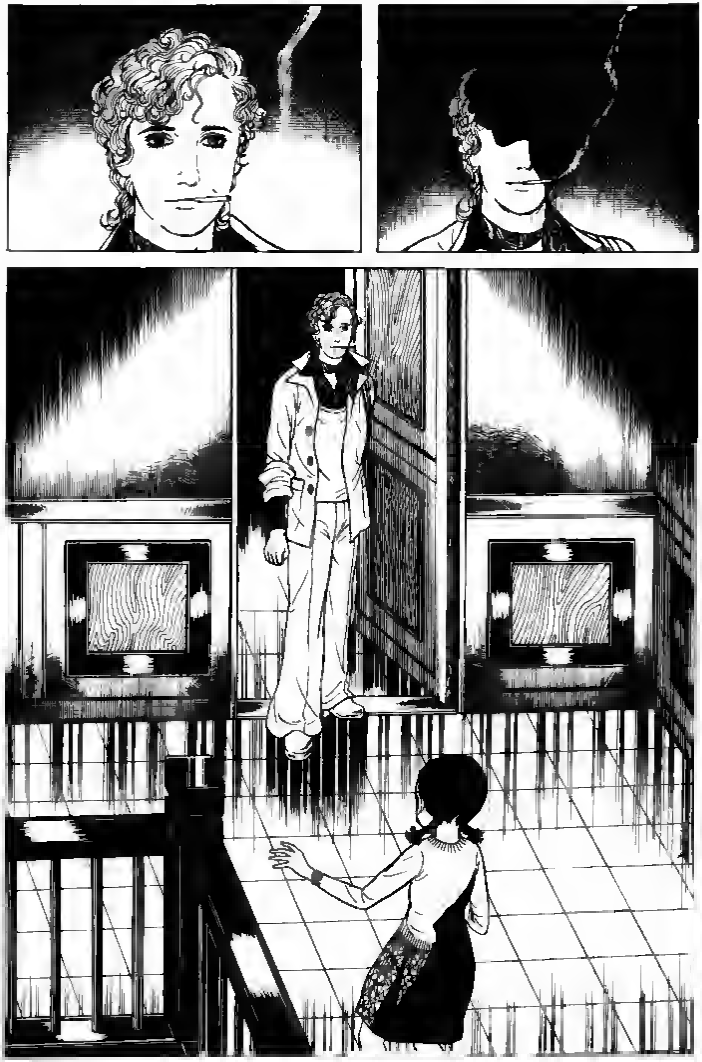

SSH
CREAK
...!!
THE FOUNTAIN PEN ISN'T HERE!!
IT-IT ISN'T HERE!!
THIS MUST BE WHERE I FELL.


I-I REALLY HOPE IT ISN'T IN THAT ROOM...
M-MAYBE I DROPPED IT ON THE SECOND FLOOR.
IT MIGHT BE...
B-BUT...


AHH!!
SFX: CREAK
SFX: CREAAAAAK


SFX, CREAAAAK

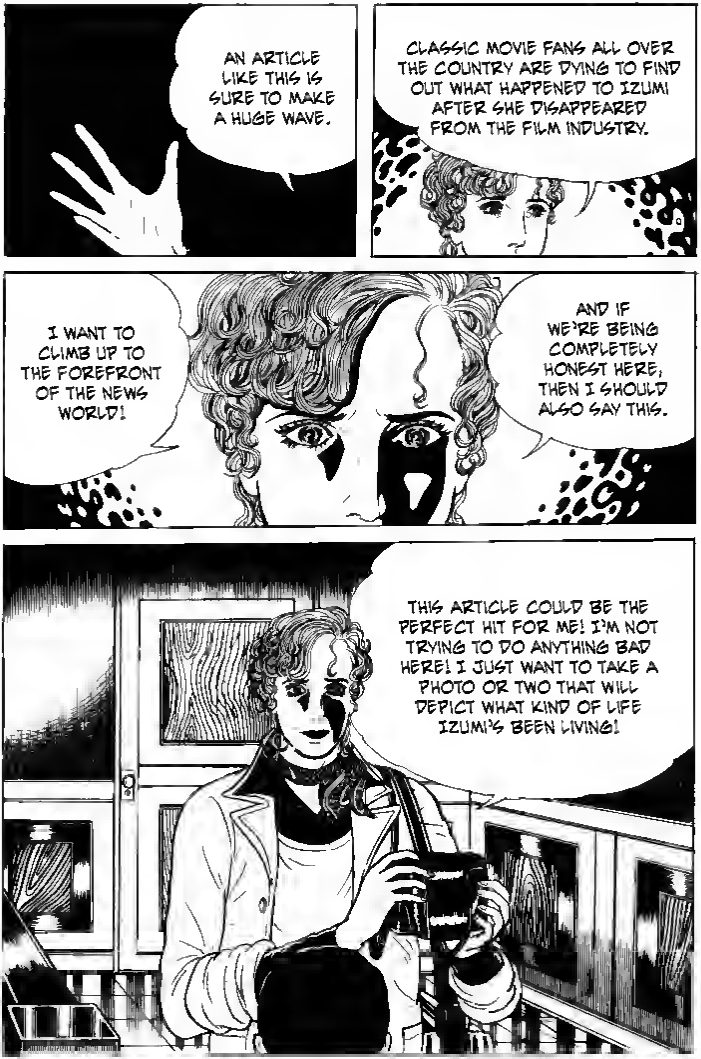
コト…



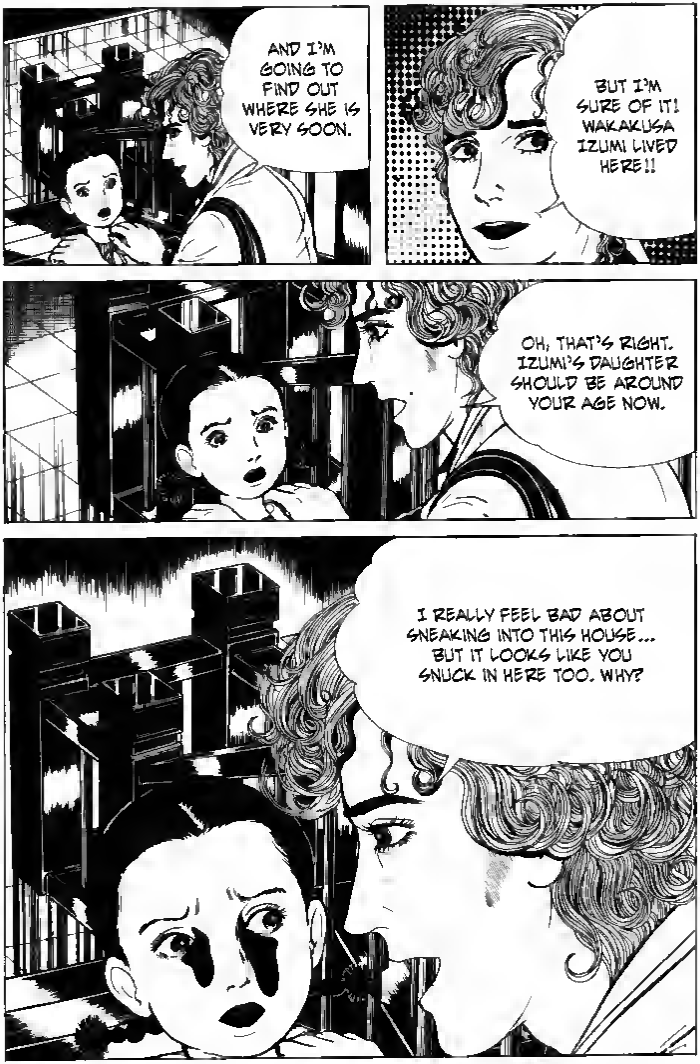
SFX: HOOOO
WHAT? A KID?
SFX: SQUEAK
キ"ュ
ス"ー"ー"
WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY BE DOING IN HERE ALL ALONE?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP HERE?
WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY BE DOING IN HERE ALL ALONE?

Freelance
Reporter
Hata Akimi
HERE'S MY CARD.
DO YOU KNOW THIS GIRL?
WHAT? NOT GOING TO TAKE IT?
I'M A FREE-LANCE REPORT-ER...

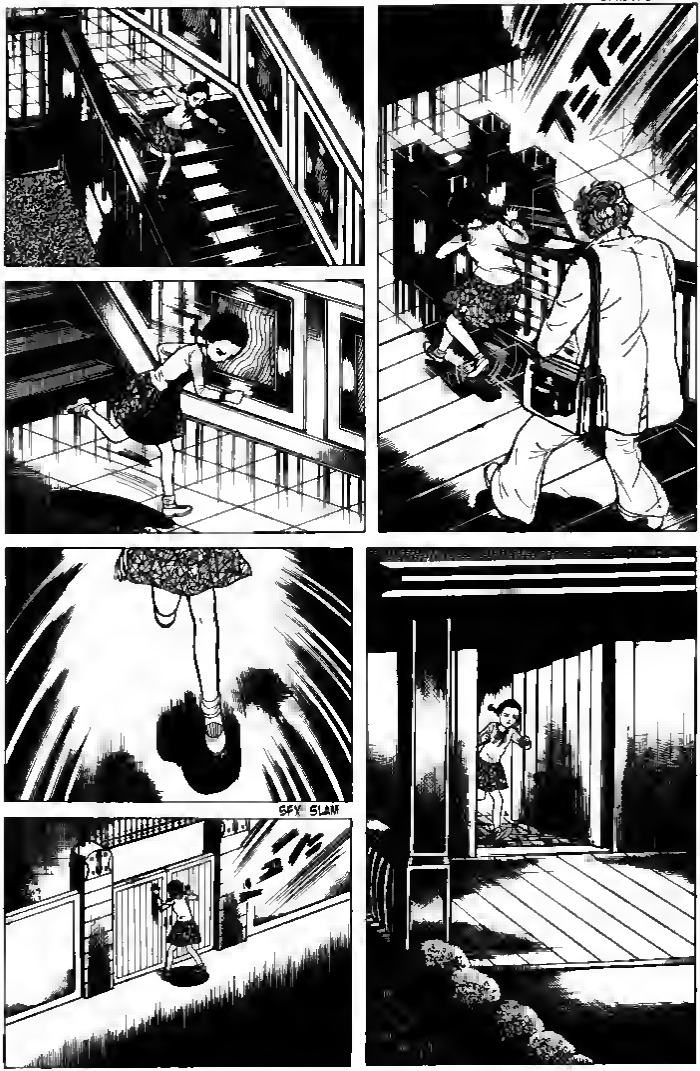
HOW ABOUT TELLING ME WHO SHE IS?
SO YOU KNOW HER.
THAT GAVE YOU QUITE THE SHOCK.
I CAME HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ABOUT WHAT WAKAKUSA IZUMI'S BEEN UP TO EVER SINCE SHE RETIRED.
LET ME BE HONEST WITH YOU.

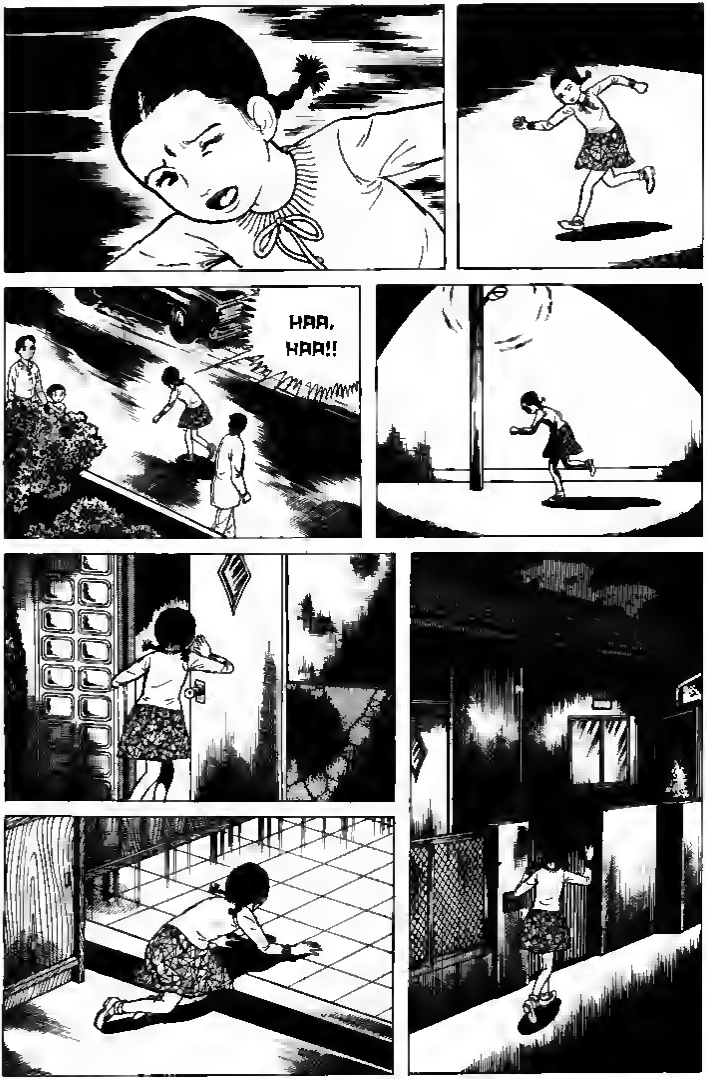

AN ARTICLE LIKE THIS IS SURE TO MAKE A HUGE WAVE.
CLASSIC MOVIE FANS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ARE DYING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO IZUMI AFTER SHE DISAPPEARED FROM THE FILM INDUSTRY.
I WANT TO CLIMB UP TO THE FOREFRONT OF THE NEWS WORLD!
AND IF WE'RE BEING COMPLETELY HONEST HERE, THEN I SHOULD ALSO SAY THIS.
THIS ARTICLE COULD BE THE PERFECT HIT FOR ME! I'M NOT TRYING TO DO ANYTHING BAD HERE! I JUST WANT TO TAKE A PHOTO OR TWO THAT WILL DEPICT WHAT KIND OF LIFE IZUMI'S BEEN LIVING!

YOU'LL HELP ME OUT, WON'T YOU?
I FINALLY FIGURED OUT THAT THIS HOUSE BELONGS TO WAKAKUSA IZUMI... AND HER REAL NAME IS UEHARA MATSUKO!!
THEY ALL SAY THAT AN UGLY OLD WOMAN WHO COULD NEVER BE AN ACTRESS AND HER DAUGHTER LIVED HERE.
BUT NO MATTER WHO I ASK, IT SEEMS LIKE THE NEIGHBORS DON'T HAVE A CLUE.
AND AS OF NOW, THIS HOUSE IS DESERTED. THERE ISN'T A SINGLE SCRAP OF EVIDENCE ANYWHERE.


AND I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHERE SHE IS VERY SOON.
BUT I'M SURE OF IT! WAKAKUSA IZUMI LIVED HERE!!
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. IZUMI'S DAUGHTER SHOULD BE AROUND YOUR AGE NOW.
I REALLY FEEL BAD ABOUT SNEAKING INTO THIS HOUSE... BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU SNUCK IN HERE TOO. WHY?

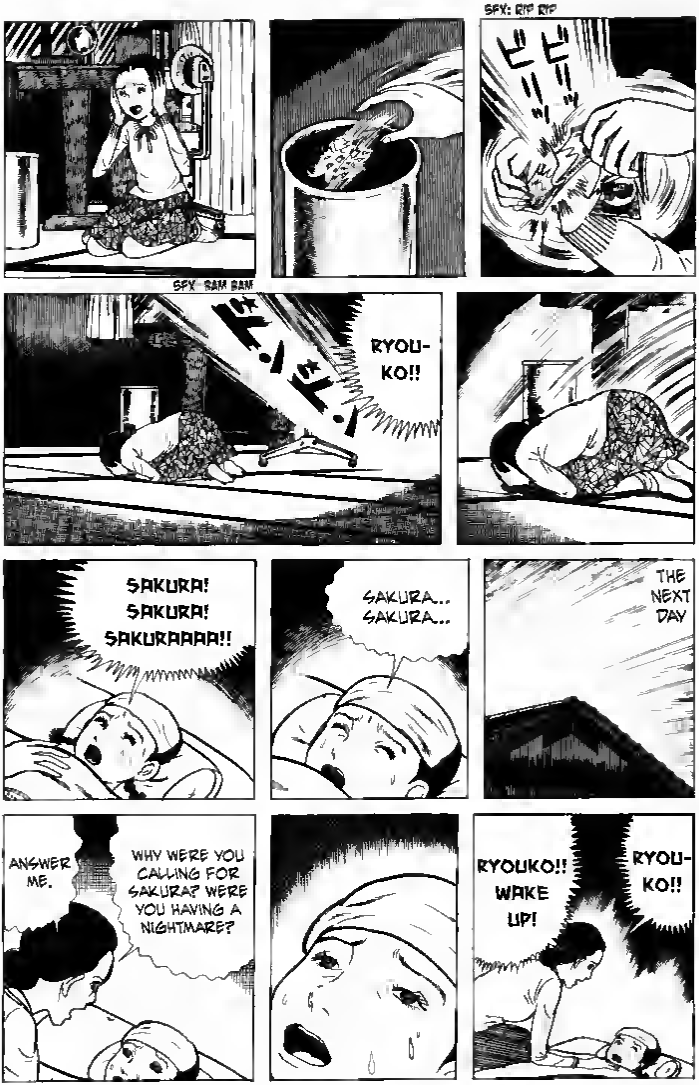
TELL ME!!
HERE'S 10,000 YEN. TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW, AND I'LL REWARD YOU WITH THIS.
LET ME GO!
LET ME GO!
KYAAA AAHH!!
SFX: CHOMP
ガブッ
LET ME GO!!


SFX. DASH
ズドー
SFX. SLAM

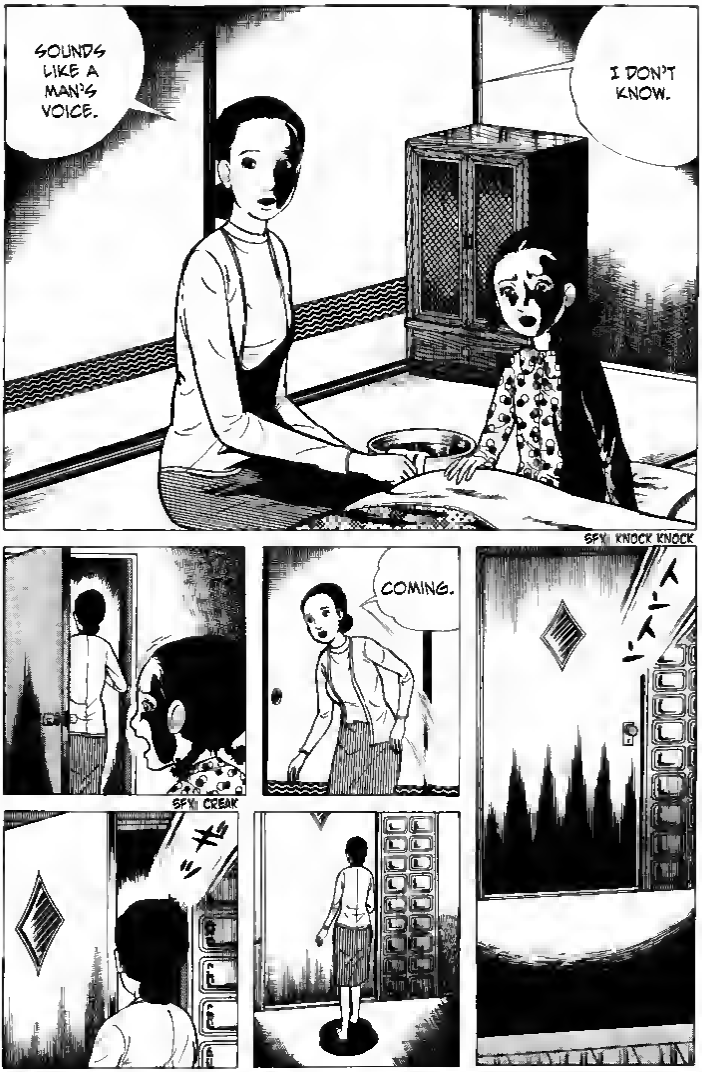

HAA,
HAA!!

RYOUKO!!
SFX. CLICK
SFX. SLAM
HAA, HAA!!
HAA, HAA!!
ハアハア
バン!
SFX. SAW SAW
ドンドン!
RYOUKO!! WHAT'S WRONG?!

AHHH!!
RYOU-KO!
RYOUKO! TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON! OPEN THE DOOR!!
SFX: RIP
ビリッ

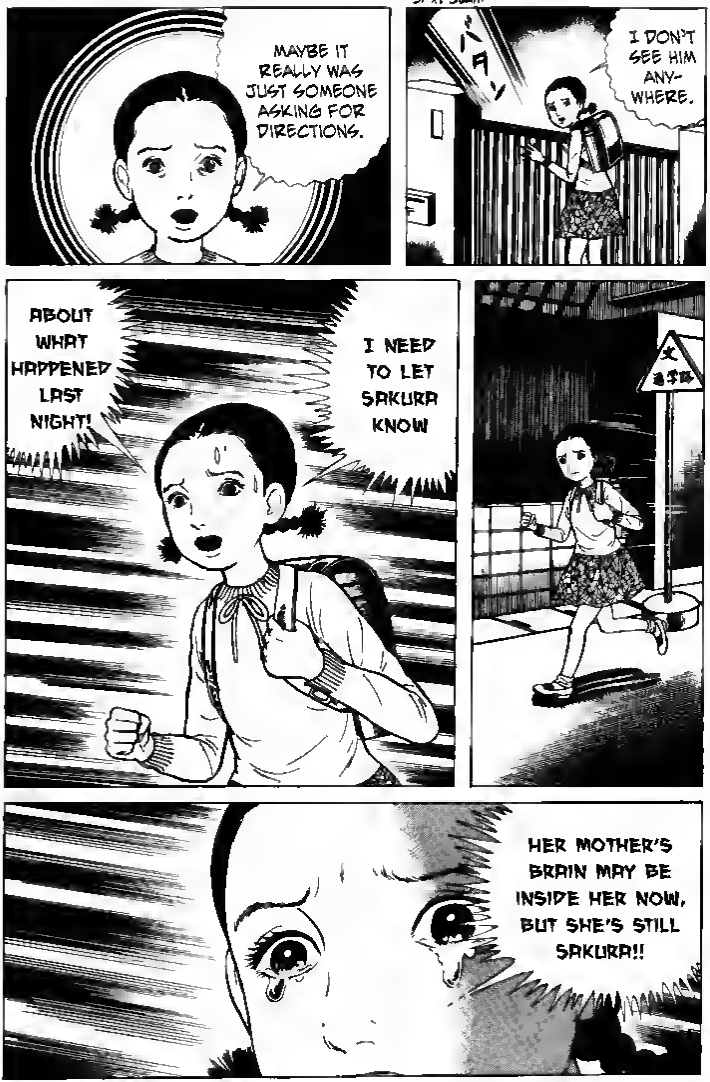

SFX: RIP RIP
SFX: SAM SAM
RYOU-KO!!
SAKURA! SAKURA! SAKURAAAA!!
SAKURA... SAKURA...
THE NEXT DAY
ANSWER ME.
WHY WERE YOU CALLING FOR SAKURA? WERE YOU HAVING A NIGHTMARE?
RYOUKO!! WAKE UP!
RYOU-KO!!

YOU SHOULD STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL TODAY.
YOU'RE COVERED IN SWEAT...
HAA, HAA...
SFX: KNOCK KNOCK
EXCUSE ME.
SFX: KNOCK KNOCK
HAA, HAA...
WH-WHO IS THAT?!


SOUNDS LIKE A MAN'S VOICE.
I DON'T KNOW.
SFX: KNOCK KNOCK
COMING.
SFX: CREAK

HAA, HAA...
IT WAS A YOUNG MAN I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
D-DID HE LEAVE?
WH-WHO WAS IT?
HE WAS ACTUALLY QUITE HANDSOME.
WH-WHAT DID HIS FACE LOOK LIKE?
HE ASKED ME FOR DIRECTIONS.

WHAT'S WRONG?
HAND-SOME...
I NEED TO HURRY, OR I'LL BE LATE!
WHAT?!
NOTHING! I THINK I'LL GO TO SCHOOL AFTER ALL!
BYE NOW!!


MAYBE IT REALLY WAS JUST SOMEONE ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS.
SFX: SLAM
バタン
I DON'T SEE HIM ANY-WHERE.
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT!
I NEED TO LET SAKURA KNOW
HER MOTHER'S BRAIN MAY BE INSIDE HER NOW, BUT SHE'S STILL SAKURA!!

I'M EARLY, SO IF I WAIT HERE, I SHOULD SEE HER.
HAA, HAA...
HEY, YOU.
YOU'RE UEHARA SAKURA, AREN'T YOU?
I SEE... YOU LOOK JUST LIKE IZUMI DID WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD.

WHO ARE YOU?
HERE'S A PICTURE OF HER.
I CAME HERE TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ON WHAT WAKAKUSA IZUMI'S BEEN DOING EVER SINCE SHE RETIRED.
HOHOH! THAT'S A PRETTY MATURE GLARE FOR SOMEONE YOUR AGE.
BUT AS I WAS INVESTIGATING, I ENDED UP GETTING INTERESTED IN SOMETHING ELSE...
THERE'S THAT GLARE AGAIN...

I DIDN'T FIND ANYTHING RELATED TO IZUMI, BUT I DID FIND THIS.
WHAT?!
I DID A LITTLE INVESTIGATION OF YOUR HOUSE LAST NIGHT.
LOOK.
ANIMAL HAIR...
アパート

I ALSO FOUND THIS...
IT WAS STUFFED BEHIND SOME BOOKS AND CURTAINS...
SEE?
WHEN YOU TURN IT AROUND ...
A TILE FROM A ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR.
IT'S CO-VERED IN BLOOD!!

洗礼第3巻——終わり——

●エッセイ

シワがふえればふえるほど

伊藤比呂美

このたびこの『洗礼』を読みなおす機会に、「楳図かずおの歴史」という、いってみれば著作リストを編集部から送っていただきまして、あたしはもう、おのれの精神的遍歴をそこに見るようで、感動したのであります。楳図かずおの表現したなにかは、むかし好きだったんですなんていうのにとどまらず、その後も『漂流教室』や『わたしは真悟』に、あたしは出会いつづけ、けっきょくのところ、あの恐怖にこわばるシワだらけの顔や大きくあいた口は、あたしの生き方そのものにかなり影響をあたえてるんじゃないかと思えるのです。

なんといっても最初は『ねこ目の少女』と思っていましたが、著作リストによれば、それは、一九六五年の「少女フレンド」、あたしが10歳のときです。それ以前から、楳図まんがにはちょくちょく出会っていたはずです。そういえば、同じ六五年の「少年マガジン」に『半魚人』がかかれています。あのとき、あたしは心のどこかで、楳図かずおを少年ど

もに取られてしまったような嫉妬を感じたものです。男の子なんかに楳図かずおのよさがわかるかという。つまり、その時点で、あたしはかなり数多くの、少女まんがとしての楳図作品に接していたことはまちがいありません。

あのころ、恐怖まんがが大はやりでした。楳図作品もふくめて、全体として、皮膚病とかウロコとか死骸とか臓物とか、そういう、触れたらイヤという感覚にうったえてくるものが多かったような気がします。まんが漬けの毎日を送っていたあたしは恐怖まんがをあびるように読みふけっていましたが、読むたびに「やっぱり楳図かずおよっ」と思いなおしていたものです。なにしろ楳図まんがのヒロインたちはとびぬけて美しく、それだけに形相はすさまじく、恐怖も気持ち悪さもいちいち真にせまり……読みたくないんです、ほんとは。夜、トイレに行けなくて苦悶するのはわかってましたから。それでも読まざるをえない。ほかの恐怖まんがでがまんしておけばいいのに、やはりいったん楳図かずおを知ってしまうと、ちょっとやそっとの刺激じゃ満足できなくて……という子どもながらに病的、嗜癖的なまんがの読み方をしてました。

当時のあたしは、デブで（学年一の肥満児でした）ブスで（美人の肥満児なんてどこにもいませんから）、身体が重たいから、外に出ていってゴム段なんかに加わる気にもなれない。いきおい、うちの中でまんがを読むしかなかったんです。

楳図作品のヒロインたちほど金持ちでも貧乏でもなかったあたしの家のトイレは、くみ

取り式で、暗い廊下のつきあたりにありました。昭和三〇年代から四〇年代にかけてです。あれは、トイレと呼ぶより、おべんじょ、ごふじょうと呼ぶのにふさわしいような場所でした。きんかくしから中をのぞきこむと、なにかがうごめいているように見え、いえ、じっさい細かい虫たちがうごめいていたのです。夜には、薄暗い電灯が1こだけともるのでした。しゃがんでいると、上の方の小さい窓からいつも見下ろされているような気がしました。あたしを見下ろしているのは、昼間読んだばっかりの、そぼぬれた半魚人や雨女、ねこ目を見ひらいた少女や歯をむき出したへび女にちがいありませんでした。トイレの戸をあけっぱなしにしたり、懐中電灯を持ちこんだり、いろいろと工夫はしてみましたが、どれもろくな効果はなかったんです。そして、楳図かずおを読んだことのない母にはその恐怖をいっこうに理解されず、臆病者あつかいされて、叱られていましたっけ。

あたしは、学校の行き帰りなど、ぼうっと歩きながら、ひそかに、いつかとつぜん、肥満したあたしという殻がパカリとわれて、中から美しい少女である「ほんものの」あたしが出てくるんだなんて考えていました。今になって思えば、どこか楳図かずお的です。もっとくわしくいうならば、楳図かずおの中でも『洗礼』的です。いえ、現実にそうなるなんてけっして思っちゃいませんでしたが、そんな夢想でもしないかぎり、あたしの肉体も、これから経験しつつある思春期も、あまりに八方ふさがりだったのです。

10年ほど前に赤んぼうを産んで育てていたとき、しきりに、『赤んぼう少女』を思い出

して、夜中に赤んぼうと二人きりになると、いいしれない恐怖におそわれました。あれは一九六七年の「少女フレンド」、あたしが小学校六年生のときの作品です。

邪悪な赤んぼうが大きくなって、暴れまわる幼児になりましたら、朝に夕に、『まことちゃん』を思い出しました。一九七六年の「少年サンデー」です。少女まんがを読まないあたしのパートナーも、『まことちゃん』なら読んでいて、現実の子育てにおける幼児像とのあまりの類似性に、一家をあげて日々感動していました。

そうそう、楳図体験の現実化はまだある。数年前にダイエットして体重が減りました。若くなくなってからのダイエットは、まず、みにくくシワが増えるので要注意です。すっかりシワだらけになった顔を鏡で見ながら、しきりになつかしいような、むかし知ってただれかに再会したような、そんな気がしましたが、あれは、楳図キャラクターだったんです。ねこ目の少女その他もろもろが、くわっと口を開けたときのシワっぽさ。

それから、魚を料理したあと、ずいぶんたってから、ふと、手にこびりついてるウロコを見つけたとき。あたしは、つい『へび女』のことを心に親しく思い出しながら、子どもたちに見られないように、ウロコをはがしてこっそり捨てます。いけないいけない、このあいだ食べたカナリヤの羽も始末しておかなけりゃとあたしはそっと思います……。

そして、この『洗礼』ですが、もちろん身に覚えがないわけはありません。あたし自身、しみだらけの顔をもった女の娘として彼女と精神的に戦いつつ大きくなってきましたし、

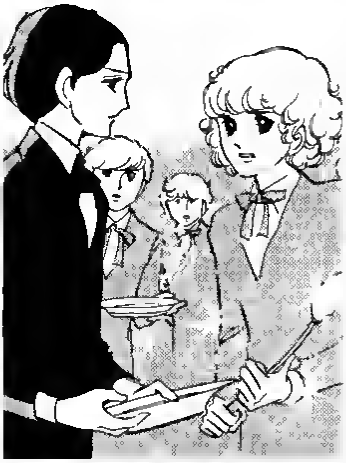
今はあたし自身が、その母にそっくりのしみだらけのばばあになりつつあり、しかも、うちの中には、あたしにそっくりなのにかがやく思春期直前の肉体をもった娘が二人もいるんですもの。

いいえ、今あげたいくつかの例にとどまらず、ふしぎなことですが、楳図かずおのまんがは、おとなになればなるほど、あたしにとって他人ごとではなくなってきます。年とってシワがふえればふえるほど、ますますおもしろく読めるようになっていきます、年をとるというのは、どんな妖怪変化な経験や感情でも共有できるっていうこと、あるいは楳図かずおの妖怪変化たちに、あたし自身が近くなっていってるってことなんでしょうか。それとも楳図かずおのまんがそのものが、そういうちからを持ってるってことなんでしょうか。

伊藤比呂美　詩人。東京都板橋区出身。青山学院大学卒。詩集『わたしはあんじゅひめ子である』『手・足・肉・体』、育児書の定番『良いおっぱい・悪いおっぱい』などがある。コミックは現在、主に青年誌を愛読、最近は能條純一『月下の棋士』のファン。

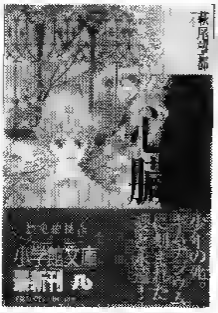
● 全巻絶賛発売中!!

トーマの心臓 全1巻



冬の朝、一人の少年が死んだ。ギムナジウムに集う少年たちに波紋が広がる。初期大傑作

★エッセイ：大原まり子



11月のギムナジウム 全1巻

名作「トーマの心臓」の原型となった表題作などの初期傑作短編集

収録作品：11月のギムナジウム／秋の旅／塔のある家／もうひとつの恋／かわいそうなママ／白き森白き少年の笛／セーラ・ヒルの聖夜

★エッセイ：羽仁未央

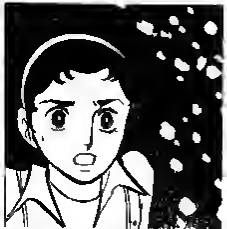
小学館文庫で読む!!

萩尾望都

11人いる!

宇宙大学の最終テスト。受験生をトラブルが襲う

全1巻



収録作品：11人いる！／続11人いる！／東の地平西の永遠ースペーススストリート

★エッセイ：中島らも

スター・レッド

第5世代の火星人レッド・星と赤い火星の運命ー

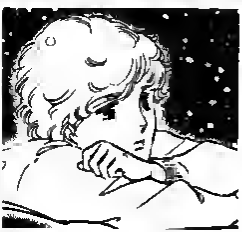
全1巻

★エッセイ：小谷真理

訪問者

「トーマの心臓」番外編の表題作など珠玉の4編

全1巻



収録作品：訪問者／城／エッグ・スタンド／天使の擬態　★エッセイ：折原みと

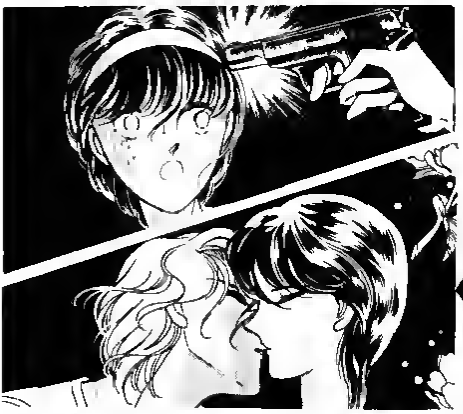
●全巻絶賛発売中!!●

そして5回の鈴が鳴る

美しい鈴の音が鳴くたびに、少女は男を殺めていく。恐怖と愛に満ちたホラー短編集

全1巻

収録作品：訪問者は真夜中に…／そして5回の鈴が鳴る／優しい殺人者／目撃者にさようなら／冬の花は鎮魂歌／クリスタル・ドール／眠る街／紅い伝説　★エッセイ　吉岡小鼓音



凍った夏の日

こく平凡な夏の夕暮れ。だが少女の悲劇はすでに始まっていた。ミステリアスな愛と死の短編集

全1巻

収録作品：3人目が消えた／凍った夏の日／殺意には蒼いリボンをかけて／午前0時の逃亡者／なにかが闇で見ている／自殺室　ルームナンバー404／ウイークエンドの招待状　★エッセイ　森　由里子

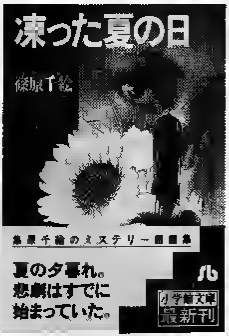
闇のパープル・アイ

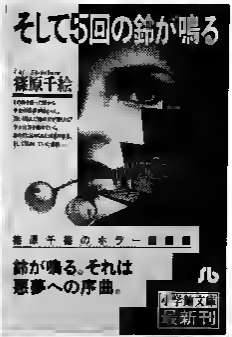
全7巻

瞳が紫にかわる時、少女はヒョウに変身する。変身人間・尾崎倫子、その娘・舞、そして一族の戦いを描く戦慄のサスペンス・ロマン

同時収録：さよなら♥わたしの黒い影―⑦巻

エッセイ：①青島美幸／②鈴木ほのか／③林あまり／④佐山陽規×篠原千絵（対談）／⑤佐藤和夫／⑥やまさき十三／⑦久美沙織





小学館文庫で読む!!

篠原千絵

スローステップ

●全4巻●あだち 充

SLOWSTEP

小学館文庫

洗礼 3

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101-01　東京都千代田区一ツ橋 2-3-1
振替（00180-1-200）
TEL　販売 03-3230-5749
　　編集 03-3230-5456

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